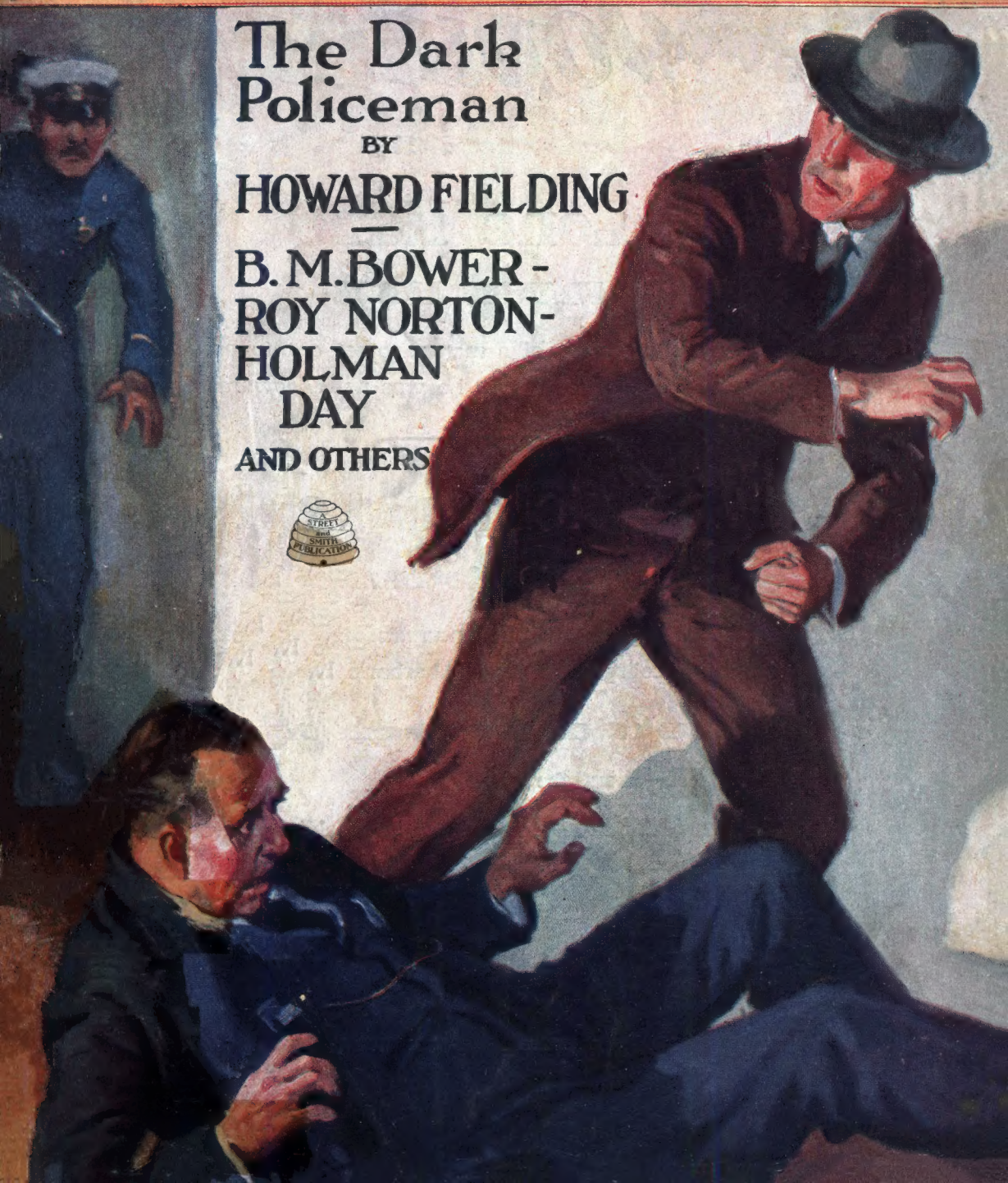


WEEKLY FEB. 11, 1928

The Popular

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Policeman
BY
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HOLMAN
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Volume LXXXIX

Number 1

The Popular

PUBLISHED WEEKLY

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YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION, \$6.00

SINGLE COPY, 15 CENTS

By



The Dark Policeman

When the Crown Theater robbery and murder was reported, police headquarters crime detection. As Sandy McKenna, one of the suspects, said: "The bulls are full Here is a novel about a mystery which describes police methods graphically and

CHAPTER I.

"THE INSPECTOR WANTS TO SEE YOU."

CAREFREE as a lamb in a pasture, Leslie McKenna—known to his friends and the police as "Sandy"—strolled up Centre Street and glanced across at the massive granite building that safeguarded his photograph and finger prints. With him was Joe Brill, who had enriched the archives of headquarters in a similar manner.

"That old monkeys' nest is nothing in our lives to-day, Joe," McKenna said. "There's a thing or two they ought to want us for, but they don't know it."

"Well, don't tell 'em about it," Brill warned him, as if really anxious. "Shut off the loud speaker, you nut."

Sandy had a grand voice for outdoor

oratory, and a few drinks had improved it. A police car had just stopped in front of the entrance of headquarters, and an inspector and two or three other men were getting out; but Sandy and Joe were not yet opposite that point, and no utterance softer than a yell could be heard at such a distance amid the noises of the city.

"They can't hear me," Sandy said; "but at that I wouldn't put it past them to tune in on me if they wanted to. The bulls are full of new tricks in these days, Joe—scientific stunts that you wouldn't think were possible. They'll soon be able to identify a poor guy by the hole he made in the air when he got away."

"Don't talk foolish," Brill growled—not because it was foolish but because it made him uncomfortable. He didn't like to think of the police as after him

Howard Fielding



Author of
"Who Hides Captain Reddy?"
"A Bit of Inside Work," Etc.

dug into the problem with a vim, focusing upon it the cleverest modern methods of of new tricks these days—scientific stunts that you wouldn't think were possible." authentically. It proves that criminals haven't even the ghost of a chance to win.

in new ways that he couldn't understand.

"Snap out of it, Joe," his cheerful friend responded. "Nobody's got anything on you. That's our old friend, Inspector Berry, over there. Let's go across and step on his toe."

"Say, he heard you," Brill whispered, as if the occurrence would be fatal.

It was hardly possible that Berry had heard, yet he had suddenly begun to stare at them over the forward end of the car in which he had come down from his bailiwick in Harlem. The two crooks were now nearly opposite; and McKenna halted, took off his hat, and saluted with a bow and a flourish in the style of a more courteous era.

He was emboldened to this performance not by liquor alone but by the consciousness of virtue. He had just

landed a nice job as electrician with a concern on Centre Street, and it was in celebration of this beginning of an honest life—as he really meant it to be—that he had invited Joe Brill into a neighboring speakeasy for several drinks of Scotch that had probably been made in an East Side cellar.

Behind Sandy's back Brill was exploring him to break away, but Sandy didn't move till the inspector ceased to look at him and began to speak with somebody who had his head inside the car. Then the two crooks went on their way, McKenna airily indifferent, and Brill so fuddled with apparently causeless terror and with whisky that for a few seconds his eyes were of little use to him.

He saw only that no one crossed directly toward them; he failed to notice

that the man who had been half hidden by the inspector's car went up the other side of Centre Street along with several ordinary wayfarers. But when they turned west into Broome Street, Brill woke up and began to fumble with his vest pocket as if hunting for a cigar. Really he was signaling in a sort of deaf-and-dumb alphabet:

"A dick is tailing us."

His hands moved in a natural manner not at all suggestive of hocus-pocus, but Sandy McKenna didn't miss the trick, even though his head was full of bogus Scotch. He and Brill were famous for their skill in silent communication and were sometimes called the "Radio Twins." Quêer twins they were, for McKenna was six feet one, blue-eyed, sandy haired, and on the sunny side of thirty; while Brill was ten years older, six inches shorter, thickset and swarthy. And in mind and spirit they were as different as they looked—total misfits as friends; but Brill stuck to McKenna as the only man he had ever been able to get along with, and there was a reason why his tall pal never tried to give him the great "gunny."

This reason was that Brill's perfectly respectable married sister, living in Youngstown, Ohio, had taken McKenna's kid brother—Steve—into her home seven years ago, at the time when Sandy was in his first trouble with the law, and the kid had no place to go, the boys being orphans. Brill was credited with having put Steve into that good home, and it was a matter for undying gratitude.

The kid was now in New York, a special student at Columbia, but the brothers did not live together. They met only in private. Steve was forbidden to tell his friends that he had a brother; and in Sandy's set Joe Brill was the only one who knew that Steve was in the city, or, indeed, had ever heard of his existence.

It was for Steve's sake that Sandy had made his latest and most rigid resolution to go straight, and it is certain that he didn't want to get into trouble with the police and have the kid learn of it, and perhaps try to help, and so get his own name into the papers. But the realization of serious danger hadn't yet penetrated the Scotch mist in Sandy's brain. He thought he had made Inspector Berry sore with his fool salute, and that the worst that need be feared was to be invited to come back and get an earful of rough talk.

"Turn left," Brill was signaling, with the intent that they should turn down Lafayette Street at the end of the short block.

"Forget it, Joe," McKenna said from the side of his mouth; and he faced about and bestowed a pleasant smile on the detective who was overtaking them.

The detective halted instantly, and his right hand reached for his pistol.

"Collar!" he cried, addressing a patrolman who had come out of Lafayette Street; and the two crooks were caught between two guns. They themselves were unarmed, as an immediate frisking proved. The Sullivan law was one that Sandy had never violated and he didn't own a pistol; but Brill did, and sometimes carried it, though he was no gunman.

"What's it for, chief?" Sandy inquired.

"Inspector Berry wants to see you."

"Well, that's no cause for worry. It's a pleasure."

He looked as if he meant it, and Brill seemed to be asleep on his feet. Thus, though the arrest had been made in rather fierce style, there obviously was no trouble coming from the prisoners, and the two officers merely walked along with them toward headquarters.

"You're lit up, Sandy," the detective said. "How is it that Joe didn't get any? Wasn't he with you?"

"He was, but he's more sober minded

than I am. And he's taking life more serious than usual to-day."

This was true, though Sandy had no idea of stating a fact. The Scotch whisky was talking. But the detective seemed interested.

"What's on his mind?" he inquired.

"I didn't ask him," Sandy said. "I never intrude on the meditations of a serious thinker."

Beyond doubt Brill was taking life seriously on this occasion. He hadn't spoken a word, nor even seemed to listen. With his head hanging forward he was marching like a tired soldier, staring at the calves of his tall friend's legs.

They were led into the information room, which is furnished only with a desk in the middle and a chair for the officer on duty. In the rear corners are elevators; to the right a corridor leads to the room where prisoners are booked, and to the offices of various detective bureaus.

Inspector Berry was not in sight. The information man thought he had gone up to the fourth floor, and this puzzled the detective who had brought the prisoners in. His orders had been to take them to the inspector at once, but the place where he was to be found had slipped the sleuth's mind. Leaving McKenna and Brill in charge of the officer who had helped bring them in and of two others who happened to be present, he went to make sure that Berry had really gone upstairs. Returning, he and the uniformed men who had acted as guards put Sandy and Joe into an elevator and took them to the fourth floor.

A short ride, but before the fourth floor was reached an almost miraculous change had taken place in Sandy McKenna. He stepped out of the elevator a sober man, though he had been worse than fifty-fifty when he stepped in.

For this phenomenon Joe Brill was responsible. Joe had not spoken a sin-

gle word since his arrest, but while the car was going up he had found opportunity to use his educated fingers for the transmission of a two-word message to his companion in misfortune.

"Crown Theater."

That was the message, and before the last word was completed the Scotch mist was all blown out of Sandy's brain. The full meaning of the communication was:

"We're arrested for the holdup in the Crown Theater last night."

A holdup and a murder, and a bad one at that. Conviction would mean death in the chair. And for reasons which will presently appear, the two prisoners were badly situated with regard to this crime.

Sandy had read of it in the morning papers, but it hadn't caused him the least uneasiness. He had got the impression that the police would make short work of the case; that they virtually knew already who had done the thing, and that the right men didn't have a chance.

As he and Brill were *not* the right men, why worry? Bandit stuff was not in Sandy's line nor in Joe's. The police would know they hadn't committed such a crime, even if it should be discovered how close they had been to the scene of it.

Full of enthusiasm for an honest life, and of hope for a really good job, Sandy had entirely forgotten the murder at the Crown Theater. When he met his gloomy friend that afternoon, Sandy had talked of the job he had just landed, and Joe as usual hadn't talked at all. There had been no mention of the holdup, though it was now apparent that Joe had read the account of it and that it had lain in his mind.

The reminder of the case, when Joe signaled it, hit Sandy with a shocking suddenness and went over him like a bucket of ice water. He saw instantly that he had been banking on a mere

delusion. The police didn't know who had committed the murder. Why had he been so sure of this? Something in the newspaper must have convinced him, but he couldn't remember what it was.

In the first moments, before the whisky was fairly out of him, he was dazed by his own danger and Joe's, but he couldn't believe that such a crime could be pinned on them. The arrest itself was bad enough, for a man in his position. It would knock him out of his job; it would break up all his plans, advertise him as a crook, force him to continue to go crooked in order to live and to stake his brother.

And what would it do to the kid? Steve would never lie low while this piece of trouble was in the works. He would read of it in the late afternoon papers and would show up at headquarters in the early evening. And tomorrow everybody in the college, all his new friends, would know that he had a brother who was a professional criminal and was under arrest for murder. Certainly this was a tough break to come just when a man gets started to go straight.

CHAPTER II.

IN THE DARK ROOM.

NATURALLY McKenna was pawing around in his memory for every word of the story of last night's murder. Aside from the point that the police seemed to be on the track of the right men, there had been something else that had seemed to make him safe, but he was so confused that he couldn't recall it. Yet he was clear enough as to the main facts of the case. It was like this.

The Crown Theater is on One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street. Sandy and Joe had been drawn into it last evening by the title of a movie play, "A Crook's Life." The piece had proved to be unlike the life of a crook or any other human being, and the two wise

guys hadn't sat it out. They had quit, feeling that they had been robbed of fifty cents apiece. The greater robbery—the holdup of the manager of the house by crooks far more realistic than those shown on the screen—had been staged in the box office about an hour afterward.

Details came from the ticket seller. Except the bandits themselves, there was no one else alive who could tell the story. He and the manager were in the box office about half past eleven when two men entered with drawn pistols. They must have been hidden in the balcony when the house was darkened after the departure of the audience, and have come down the east stairway whose foot was near the narrow door of the office.

An employee was closing the big doors of the theater, and he said that no one had been lurking in the lobby and that no one had come in from the street. By his account he didn't see the bandits nor know anything about the hold-up till it was all over.

Behind the office was a room used for business purposes. The robbers backed their victims into that room, where there was a safe which was left untouched. In fact, it contained nothing worth the trouble of opening it. The entire receipts of the day, about nine hundred dollars, were in the manager's pocket which he habitually used instead of a bank. The newspaper said he had an extensible pocketbook, and often looked as if he were carrying a football under his coat.

The bandits ordered him to hand over the money, and he put up a fight, and was shot dead. The ticket seller got a grazing wound in the left side, whereupon he promptly dropped; and his imitation of a dead man was so good that he escaped further injury. The murderers took the money, fled down a stairway to the cellar, and got out by a door on an alley.

The police were on the scene within

a few minutes, and the wounded ticket seller gave them a good description of the robbers. The one who did the talking and the shooting was a dark man, thirty-five or forty, of medium height and heavy set. The other was "a tall, slim, light-haired young fellow." Such was the description.

That was what had caught Sandy's eye. Who would describe a man nearing thirty as a "young fellow," in these days when so many bandits are mere boys? This had seemed to let Sandy out completely, and when it was joined to the impression that the police were wise to the pair that had really done the job, it had made him disregard the case as a possible source of trouble to himself.

He had plenty of time to get a mental grip on these facts while he and Joe were being led through various corridors to a sort of anteroom where a dozing doorman sat at a desk and two other men were unpacking small pieces of apparatus on a bench at one side. The doorman telephoned the news of their arrival to some interior region, and then addressed the detective in charge of the party.

"The inspector says, what did you bring 'em up here for? He told you he was going to be in the homicide bureau. Take 'em down there. Wait a minute." The buzzer had rung, and he listened to further orders. "The inspector says to hold 'em here. He'll be out pretty soon."

At this the detective and the uniformed men sat down in all the available chairs, leaving the prisoners standing in front of them. Sandy would have paid high for a few words in private with Joe, but they couldn't speak without being overheard, and they were so well watched that no wigwag communication was practicable. Thus Sandy was in doubt whether Joe knew why they had been arrested or was merely guessing; but it was a good bet from Joe's

behavior that he knew it and something else besides. But what?

The tall prisoner had no alibi, and he was virtually sure that the short one was in the same unfortunate situation. After leaving the theater they had walked to Joe's house, not meeting a soul who knew them. Joe had gone in, saying he was tired and would hit the hay. That was what Sandy had done, a few minutes later, in his own little apartment. As they lived alone they could hardly have done worse, last night, than to go home and go to bed.

As a result of this, the only witness who could save them was one who would be on the police side of the case—the ticket seller, Dave Eichbaum by name. An inexperienced reader may wonder why that witness shouldn't have seemed a perfectly good reliance. He had seen the bandits at close range and they weren't masked. A word from him ought to save two innocent men.

But it is well known to all the "wise" that personal identification by strangers—or even by acquaintances—is one of the most untrustworthy forms of human testimony. Its actual record is a cruel combination of faulty eyesight, bad memory, misguided vindictiveness and downright perjury induced by coercion or a price.

Eichbaum was the only card, however, and the play was to get a show-down as soon as possible. It was an odds-on bet that he would identify any two men if they were tall and short, and dark and fair, and the police tipped him that they were the right ones. There was a gambling chance, however, that he hadn't been too scared to know whether the bandits were Swedes or Chinamen; that he hadn't yet forgotten the little he had noticed, and that he would tell the truth.

The thing to do was to persuade the inspector not to have the prisoners booked and locked up while the wounded witness was being sent for, and perhaps

patched up again by a doctor so that the trip wouldn't do him any harm. Delay, with booking and a few hours in a cell, would mean a big story in the papers. On the other hand, if by good luck Eichbaum should clear them before they had gone through the mill, much less would be printed about it—not enough, perhaps, to cost Sandy his job. At least, he might be free in time to reach Steve ahead of the news, and block him off from getting his name into it.

That was what Sandy cared most about, at the moment, and he was almost desperate enough to risk telling the inspector everything—the new life, the new job, the kid brother in college—and asking that it should be held confidential. If he could talk with Berry alone, he would do it, but there wasn't much chance of that.

While he was trying to consider this idea with something like a steady mind, the door of an inner room was slowly opened, disclosing the inspector on the threshold. For some seconds he stood there, making a preliminary diagnosis of the prisoners. In early life Berry studied medicine, and he has never got over it. Even in uniform he looks more like a doctor than a police officer. He never seems to be seeing a man's surface but always the secret source of trouble in his insides.

Finally he shifted his X-ray glance from the patients to the attendants—the detective and the policemen—who had risen, of course, when he appeared.

"You men will wait," he said. "McKenna and Brill, come here."

He backed away, and the prisoners followed him, and the door was shut behind them. They were in a room which seemed to have been stripped so that it might be refitted for some new use. There was nothing in it except two heavy wooden armchairs in the middle of the floor. The walls were paneled with very dark wood; the single win-

dow was covered by shutters of the same somber hue as the panels. There had once been a chandelier, like one of those bell-shaped atrocities that hang over a table in a dining room of a cheap flat, but the lamps were gone, except for one frosted bulb on a wire—the only source of light.

Sandy surveyed this scene and drew a deep, unsteady breath.

"Inspector," he said, "I couldn't call this room cheerful if I had been invited into it to be married to the Queen of Diamonds."

"You'll never be joined up with another diamond, McKenna," Berry responded. "Your game is over."

The reference was to Sandy's criminal line, a sort of practical joking, usually by means of the telephone. If a jeweler lost a few gems through sending them for inspection to the Prince of the Dry Tortugas who happened to be visiting the city, the police would look up Sandy McKenna when the victim made his squeal.

"Sit down," the inspector said, adding as Sandy hesitated, because there was no third seat: "You can cut out that politeness. I'll stand."

Joe Brill sat down like an old man. Beyond doubt there was a burden on his mind. It couldn't be guilt, in Sandy's opinion, but it was something heavy. Also it was mysterious, to his friend.

When Sandy was seated the inspector planted himself in front of them, looking savage, as if he meant to give them something very special on the way of a third degree. But it seemed strange that he should have brought them to this bare room, where there was no one to make record of their admissions or to hear a word. At least, there was no one in sight, and no place where any witness could be hidden, unless behind a movable panel in the wall. Sandy was reminded of his remark to Joe about new tricks; but scientific tricks require apparatus, and where was it?

"You know what you're charged with," the inspector began. "You did that job at the Crown Theater. I warn you both that whatever you say may be used against you; but also I warn *you*, McKenna, that your only good play is to come clean. It was Brill who did the actual shooting."

Joe, clutching the arms of the chair and with his head hanging forward, had been staring up through his bushy eyebrows at the face of his inquisitor. His mouth now fell open and he croaked:

"Not me."

"As for me," Sandy said, "do I look like a 'young fellow?'"

"So you read that, did you? Well, I'll say you're the youngest-looking man of your age I ever saw. You're young in the eye, and the skin, and you move quick like a boy. A witness having only a couple of life-and-death minutes to size you up might say afterward that you were twenty, and not be called dumb."

The inspector said it well, and there was considerable truth in it; but he couldn't quite conceal the fact that he was working hard to cover a weak point in his case.

"Be fair to us," McKenna pleaded. "You know we never did anything like this."

"You never were caught before, and you yourself are no gunman. I'll admit that, and it might save your life if you come clean and do it now. As I've reminded you already, Eichbaum says the short man did the shooting."

"That wasn't all he said," Sandy rejoined. "He said the short man did the talking. Now, inspector, you've got a mind and you've got ample knowledge of us two poor sinners. Do you believe that Joe Brill *talked*—especially when he had *me* with him? That will set every wise guy laughing from here to the Pacific Ocean."

It would, and Berry knew it. The underworld might try to see Joe Brill

as a bandit, but to hear him as a spokesman was beyond the imagination of the wildest dope. The inspector didn't try to meet the argument.

"I can prove that you went into the Crown Theater last night," he said, "and that you didn't come out—not with the audience."

"No honest witness can swear to *that*," Sandy answered. "All he can say is that he didn't see us. We admit going to the Crown, but the show was rotten, and we left before half past ten. I walked home with Joe and saw him go in. We had thought of sitting into a card game, but we decided to be good and go to bed. So we lost an alibi—which shows that if a man's luck is bad enough he can't avoid losing, even by staying out of the game."

Sandy was talking for all he was worth, to emphasize Joe Brill's silence. And the inspector didn't interrupt. No wonder, in view of what he was getting.

"Then you admit that you have no defense," he said.

"I'm telling the whole truth as far as it's known to me," Sandy said. "I haven't talked with Joe. He may have an alibi."

Brill shook his head and growled. McKenna hastened to cut off anything beyond the growl.

"We rely on Eichbaum; we have to," he went on, the inspector making no move to check him. "I needn't tell *you* what identification is like, but a square deal from the police will help, and I trust in you to give it to us. When you had us on the mat before, you treated us pretty rough and were tricky as the devil; but you were square, at that. It was a burglary, that time, and you could have framed Joe easy, but I believe you never framed a man yet and never will."

"Sometimes we don't need to do it," Berry said, "and this is one of those times."

"No, inspector, you're wrong there. Joe and I have quit the old life; that's the solemn truth. We're going straight, and you're not the man that wants to turn us back. I've just got an honest job that pays good money, and Joe's expecting one soon."

At this Brill rolled his gray eyes—queer eyes for so dark a man—toward Sandy with astonishment and admiration. In all his life he had never heard a lie equal to this about his looking for an honest job.

"Well," the inspector said, "what do you want? What can I do for men in your position in a case of murder?"

"You can hold off booking us till we've had our chance with Eichbaum."

"You've had your chance."

"How did we have it? When?"

"Just now, down below. Eichbaum was in my car. I brought him down here to look at the pictures. And when you made your bluff at me across the street, I pointed you out to Eichbaum."

This was deadly news. For some seconds McKenna couldn't find a voice. At last he said:

"Did that lying mutt have the crust to identify me after describing me the way he did?"

"Eichbaum knew you at a glance," the inspector said. "Of course, I don't regard that as final, considering the distance." He paused a moment and then added: "You'll have another chance."

Just as the last word left his lips the light over their heads went out, leaving the room profoundly dark. Nothing whatever could be seen. The inspector's white and well-kept hand that had been gesturing toward Sandy, within a yard of his eyes, vanished with all other objects.

But Berry was audible if not visible.

"What the hell is this?" he was demanding. "Sit still, you men. Don't you move out of those chairs."

His feet scuffed along the floor as he backed away. They heard him open a

door—opposite that of the anteroom—but no light came in.

"Jack!" he called. "What's the matter? Are the lights gone, all over the building?"

"No, sir," some one answered. "It's only our fuse, inspector. We'll fix it soon."

"Is the anteroom dark?"

"No, sir. That's on another circuit."

"I've got prisoners here," Berry said; "But it's all right if the anteroom is lighted. I've got some officers there. Fix your fuse, Jack. Can I help you?"

His voice came from some distance beyond the door, and when he spoke again the words didn't reach to where the prisoners were.

They who had been so anxious for a private conference might seem to have got their chance at last. They were seated side by side, close enough to whisper in each other's ears, but not a spoken word passed between them.

Within three seconds after the light went out Sandy had touched Joe on the breast and then on the lips in sign of silence. He dropped his hand to Joe's where it lay on the arm of the chair, and taking hold of his forefinger he began to use it like the key of a telegraph instrument, but without making a sound. Joe could *feel* the dots and dashes of the code, but no human ear could hear the movement made by forming them.

"Trick stuff," McKenna telegraphed. "Listening in. Microphone. It'll catch a whisper."

Joe missed at least half of this, because of the speed that testified to the haste of the sender in giving warning. But at least the warning itself got over. Joe took Sandy's finger and tapped out, with a fine delicacy of touch that was marvelous in so rough a man:

"I'm on; but go slower." And he put his hand in position to receive.

"You know something," Sandy signaled. "What is it?"

And Joe responded:

"I think I know who done the murder. Dave Lang. A ringer for me."

There was a crook named Dave Lang, and he looked like Brill's twin brother, though in fact they were only cousins in some remote and doubtful degree. For the past two years Lang had been running a crooked garage in Youngstown, as a cover for car stealing and bootlegging. When Sandy went out there, on the quiet, to see his kid brother and make final arrangements for bringing him to New York, he had found him on friendly terms with Lang, using his cars for joy rides, and doing odd jobs for him as a mechanic.

Sandy had broken off that connection in a hurry, and the experience had taught him that it was possible for him to want to kill a man. He felt that he would have done it, if he hadn't come in time to prevent the kid from being let in for any criminal stuff. To be reminded of Dave Lang's existence was enough to make Sandy see red. He kept steady, however, and taking Joe's finger he telegraphed:

"Has Lang come East?"

Joe answered:

"Yes. Last week. Rung me up."

"Asking for Steve?"

"Yes. I steered him off. Said Steve had gone to Boston. But it looks like Dave got to him."

All hell went through Sandy's mind. He could feel the blood beating in his temples, and it seemed to be throbbing out words.

"My brother. My kid brother."

Joe was trying to telegraph something, but Sandy couldn't get it. This form of communication was hard enough, even with the strictest attention. In their excited condition it had been a strain to resist the constant temptation to whisper a message that wasn't getting over by the silent method. And now Sandy had such a whirl of thought and fear in his brain that he couldn't

condense anything into the brief phrases that could be tapped out.

It seemed a mere nightmare to suppose that Lang had found Steve and led him into such a crime as this. The kid was living straight, attending to his studies, keeping clear of the wild set in college. Of course, he wasn't kept flush with money, but he had never complained.

Yet Sandy's hatred of Dave Lang made him quick to believe the man guilty, and to imagine him tempting Steve to look for easy money. Lang certainly was a ringer for Brill. And who was it that looked like Sandy McKenna—except for being a "young fellow?"

"My brother. My kid brother."

All the pain and dread and despair that Sandy had ever felt in all his life would not have equaled this if concentrated into a single deadly pang.

"Damn you! Why didn't you——"

Sandy found himself uttering the words aloud. He shut his teeth hard, and forced himself to use the silent language: "Why didn't you tell me?"

Joe answered:

"Dave said: 'Too bad I couldn't see Steve. Had heard he was in Columbia. I'm going home to-morrow,' he said. I thought I'd fixed it. Why would I worry you?"

Brill was far more fluent in any sign language than with his voice, but formulating and sending that last message seemed to have stretched his powers beyond the limit. He could be heard crumpling up in his chair. Sandy still held his hand and signaled:

"If you throw my brother——" and stopped there.

Joe gathered his strength and answered:

"Never. Not if I go to the chair."

Sandy gripped Joe's hand and found it cold, oily, and in a way lifeless. It didn't clasp his. He himself was doing all the gripping; Joe seemed afraid.

Sandy withdrew his own hand, and covered his eyes, a queer performance in that absolute darkness. He was thinking: "It's Heaven's mercy Joe didn't speak, right off the bat. They were listening in, but they haven't heard anything. How much longer will they keep us in the dark, waiting for us to talk?" He removed his hands from his eyes and the room was full of light.

CHAPTER III.

THE MEN IN THE BALCONY.

WHEN Sandy looked up he saw the inspector and a detective standing within ten feet of him. How long had they been there? He didn't know, but he knew that it didn't matter. They couldn't have heard anything that would put them on the track of the kid brother.

There had been no whispering. The finger telegraph was absolutely noiseless. Sandy had been tortured into uttering three or four words aloud, but he remembered them and they didn't worry him. They had no meaning for any listener. The kid brother was safe if Joe Brill would stand the gaff and keep his mouth shut. But would he do it?

While these thoughts were flashing through Sandy's mind the inspector was speaking.

"If you think you gained anything by keeping still," he said, "you're fooling yourselves. Two innocent men wouldn't have been afraid to talk."

"Two wise men in our position won't talk unless they know who's listening," Sandy replied. "If I'd known Detective Delavan was in the room I'd have talked all right. That's no offense to you, inspector. I didn't know you were here; I thought I heard you go out."

It wasn't true, of course, that Sandy would have trusted any man or angel with the secret of that silent conversation, but at least the medal he had pinned on Aloysius Delavan was a sincere tribute. Sandy had encountered

him in the course of the former trouble, and had very properly sized him up as an all-around good fellow, full of human kindness. Moreover, he had seemed to take a liking for Sandy whom he now greeted with an Irish smile that would have brightened a dungeon.

The inspector hadn't paid any attention to what Sandy was saying; in fact, he hadn't waited to hear the whole of it. He had walked past the prisoners and to the door of the anteroom. Delavan came closer and said softly:

"Cheer up, boys. Things came out all right the other time, you remember."

Joe Brill made an effort to speak. Usually that was as far as he got, and it was so in this instance. He rolled up his eyes to Delavan, and then settled down in his chair, shaking his head. Sandy had never seen Joe so far gone as that and the sight made him frantic; filled his head with crazy ideas. He thought: "If Joe is going to weaken, what can I do?" Nothing that would ever be real. He could picture himself choking the life out of Joe before he could talk. But that was a dream—a dream that stuck in his mind, however, even while he was speaking to Delavan, saying:

"Thank you, Al. I wish you were still on Berry's staff."

Delavan had been transferred to headquarters, and Sandy knew it. They had met quite often, and, though Al never preached, his influence had been a big factor in Sandy's determination to go straight. Straight, eh? And he was thinking this minute that he would murder Joe Brill if he betrayed Steve.

"Will you get into this case, Al?" he said. "I suppose not. Your job is photographs and finger prints, now, isn't it? Did they get any prints at the theater?"

Delavan glanced at the anteroom door. The inspector had gone through.

"No prints, Sandy. Don't say I told you. I might get into the case, in a way," Delavan added. "Anyhow, I can

promise you a square deal. You can bank on that."

The guarantee came from a good man, but it didn't cover the risk. The only thing Sandy cared about was assurance that Joe Brill would hold his nerve; that he wouldn't get himself out of the trouble by putting it on Dave Lang, thus bringing the kid brother into it.

"I've got to go back to my work," Delavan said. "I wish you boys the best of luck, both of you."

He shook hands with them and went out by the door into the farther room. As to what was in that room the open door had given no revelation, for a screen on the other side cut off the view.

Two policemen came from the ante-room while Delavan was making his exit in the opposite direction, and there was no opportunity for the prisoners to exchange a word on any dangerous topic. In order to support Brill's courage, McKenna tried to counterfeit his usual high spirits and cleverly to put over the good-pal stuff which Brill had never before been too dull to perceive or too gloomy to enjoy. In didn't get over this time, and the strain of the attempt almost destroyed what was left of McKenna's sanity.

The fact is that the sudden shock of his brother's danger had thrown him into a sort of panic. He retained sense enough to realize that he was far more scared for the kid's sake than there was any sane reason for being, but he couldn't see any excuse for Joe Brill. Every minute while he was making friendly faces at Joe he could have torn his heart out for having failed to give warning the instant that he learned of Dave Lang's presence in the city.

Dumb, dumb as a mutt dog; and it is easy for a keen, quick-minded man to hate a fool. With such hatred Sandy was becoming obsessed far worse than he suspected. It must be remembered

also that he had been drunk with good luck and bad liquor, and had been knocked sober in an instant by a dash of calamity. In such a case an emotional man may *feel* sober, but his head won't be so level as he thinks it is.

Minutes dragged by to the extent of an infernal half hour. Then Inspector Berry came back, with two young women and a man. By the women's costumes Sandy knew that they were ushers at the Crown Theater, but he would have said that he had never seen them before. He vaguely remembered the man as having been "on the door" last evening.

This was no ordinary line-up; but Sandy wasn't surprised by its irregularity. The whole experience had been different from anything he had ever encountered, or heard of, in police procedure. However, it was well known that Berry had his own way of doing things.

The prisoners were ordered to rise—after Sandy had risen at sight of the women and had been told to sit down. The witnesses were lined up in front of them. Sandy saw instantly that the doorman could have identified them, even under fair conditions, and that the ushers could not. He saw also that one of the women was going to tell the truth, but that the devil himself hadn't yet decided what he would inspire the other one to say. She was one of the round-eyed, eagerly credulous type.

"Well?" the inspector said, evidently addressing the male witness; but the round-eyed girl was moved by the spirit to speak first.

"I know these men," she said, in a tone that thrilled herself if not her hearers. "Yes; they were there."

"Wait a minute," the inspector interposed. "We'll hear from you." He pointed to the man, who responded with an easy assurance.

"I remember these gentlemen. They came in about nine last evening, and I

saw them go out between ten and half past."

"I'll bet you've been a hotel clerk," Sandy said.

"You win," the man replied.

"Let me get you right," the inspector said. "These men went out, you say. Are you sure they didn't come back?"

"Not past me, sir. They might have gone upstairs."

"To the balcony, you mean, by the stairways from the lobby?"

"The east stairway, sir. The west one is closed, except to let 'em out after the show, if there's any crowd up there. But I don't believe these men came back at all. I think I'd have noticed them—coming in so late, when I wasn't busy."

Here was an honest witness, and he seemed to have wrecked the case. There was a brief but heavy silence; then the inspector addressed the ushers.

"You girls were in the balcony last night."

"Yes, sir," the round-eyed girl answered hastily; "and these men were there."

"Wait. What do you say?" The inspector turned to the other girl, who was fair, with rather long, gray eyes.

"I think I never saw these men before," she said. "I don't remember them."

"Why, Edna!" The round-eyed girl seemed shocked. "You said you saw them."

"I said I saw two men a little like the description in the papers; but these are not the ones."

"They're the ones I saw."

"Where did they sit?" The inspector asked.

"Just off the right aisle, about the third row from the back."

"That would be near the head of the east stairway, wouldn't it?"

"Yes, sir."

"The papers said the bandits must have come down those stairs. Did you read that?"

"I—yes, sir; I did."

"Did you show the men to their seats?"

"No, sir. The seats aren't reserved. We just find places for people."

"When did the men come in?"

"I don't know."

"When did you first see them?"

"Round-eyes" thought a moment.

"Well, it must have been after ten," she said.

"Did they stay in those seats or did they move?"

"I didn't see them move."

"That's queer," the inspector said. "They couldn't have hidden there; it's too near an exit; too many people would pass, going out. If they ducked down between the seats they must have done it way round to one side, and toward the front. How late did you see them in those seats?"

Round-eyes went into a brief trance, staring at vacancy.

"I remember looking over there and not seeing them," she said. "That was just before the end of the performance."

"The men I saw," the gray-eyed girl asserted, "came in a little after nine, and went around to the left, pretty well down."

"Oh, Edna, I'm sure they didn't come in before ten."

The inspector let them talk it out. He encouraged them, and showed no objection to having the prisoners hear the whole debate. The net result was an agreement that two men—or perhaps two pairs of men—somewhat resembling Brill and McKenna were in the balcony of the Crown Theater last night. As to when they arrived or where they sat, the testimony was contradictory.

The gray-eyed girl was positive that the men she saw were not the prisoners, and that they were in the balcony at a time when it was certain that Brill and McKenna were downstairs. The round-

eyed girl stuck to her identification, and to her story that the men did not come into the balcony till after ten, and that they mysteriously disappeared just before the end of the performance.

The testimony on the whole was very favorable to the accused, but its effect upon their feelings was something else again. Joe Brill's face, when he dared occasionally roll his eyes sidelong toward Sandy, wore an expression as if he were trying to look into the muzzle of a pistol aimed at his ear. He was afraid of Sandy's thoughts, which he knew to be the same as his own. Brill was no psychoanalyst, but as a practical man in the burglary business he had seen numerous witnesses like the round-eyed girl. Great dreamers.

Her story amounted to almost nothing. She might have seen the right men, but she had forgotten what time it was or where the men went or what she herself had actually noticed about them. But the other girl would be a fatal card if the real bandits were ever lined up in front of her.

And the chances were that one of them was Dave Lang. Sandy would be thinking of that, Brill knew, and of the ghastly coincidence that his brother and Lang were in the balcony of the Crown Theater with intent to commit a crime, at the same time that he and Joe were downstairs, ridiculing the impossible incidents in "A Crook's Life."

CHAPTER IV.

SANDY TAKES A CHANCE.

SOME one knocked on the door of the anteroom. A policeman answered, at a sign from the inspector. Sandy turned in his chair, guessing that the man outside would deliver a message in a whisper. That was just what he did, and Sandy wouldn't have caught it if his eyes hadn't helped his ears. As it was he partly heard the words and partly read them from the man's lips.

"Lafferty telephones he can't bring Eichbaum down. He's gone to the hospital."

Sandy was humiliated. He had told the inspector to his face that he was tricky as the devil, and the next minute he had fallen for one of the tricks. The identification across Centre Street had been pure apple sauce. Eichbaum wasn't in the inspector's car; he was in Harlem.

It was now apparent that the arrest had been made on description alone. Up to the moment when he saw the Radio Twins the inspector hadn't thought of them. Probably he wouldn't have noticed them on the other side of the street unless his attention had been attracted by that drunken salute.

Sandy remembered how Joe Brill had tried to call him off, and had shown fear, more than was reasonable. Some instinct must have warned him, and it must have bitten him sudden and hard. He would never forget that Sandy had let them in for this trouble which would not have touched them otherwise. Why should he stand for it if he could see his way out?

Joe was in a very bad hole. Even the gray-eyed girl had admitted that there was a very strong resemblance between him and the shorter of the two men whom she had seen in the balcony. But she had hinted, as politely as possible, that Joe was not in the class; she remembered that the short, dark man had given her an impression of importance, as if he was accustomed to appear in public. Well, that would fit Dave Lang, who was a politician and an occasional stump speaker. Here was Joe's way out, if he wanted to take it.

These thoughts were in Sandy's mind while the message about Eichbaum was being given to the inspector. He made no secret of it nor of his surprise. It was one of Berry's tricks that he never seemed to be hiding anything.

"That wound was a scratch," he said;

"not two inches long. And it was properly attended to, right away. I suppose the fool fussed with it after he got home, and now he has an infection."

This was addressed to a man in a white-duck suit stained with various shades of brown and yellow. Berry called him Jack, as he had done before when the lights went out. Jack had come from the farther room, and the inspector went in with him, after having dismissed the witnesses. They were going back to the theater and would be available at any time.

The two prisoners remained seated side by side for ten or fifteen minutes; then the inspector returned and told them that he was going to take them uptown to call on Eichbaum. There was no display of handcuffs or any other form of severity. Attended by two detectives, they followed Berry to his car and got aboard. Nothing of importance was said to them during the ride to the Morton Memorial Hospital, which is only a few blocks from the Crown Theater.

It is a heavy gamble, in a case of murder, to confront a witness whose word is going to be like the turn of a single card, win or lose. As the critical moment drew close Joe Brill's head sank lower and lower, till he couldn't see anything but the knees of his trousers. He was just behind the inspector in the procession moving along a somewhat narrow hall on the fourth floor, and when they came to a right-angle turn Joe didn't notice it; he walked straight into the wall. Seeing that performance, Sandy thought: "It would have been better for my brother if that wall had been an open window."

They found Eichbaum in bed, and Detective Lafferty sitting beside him, speaking words of consolation. In the matter of infected wounds the ticket seller's education had been neglected. All he knew was that he had poison in his left side, close to his heart. It

might get in there, any minute, and stop the works forever. As a matter of fact, he was in no serious danger, but nobody could make him believe it.

The horror of last night had wrecked his nerve, and on the top of that he had filled himself with bad whisky to induce sleep, after he got home. He was sick from the hang over, and feverish from the infection. His eyes were red rimmed and wild; the upper part of his face was flushed and the jaws pale, with a growing beard blue-black against the skin.

There couldn't be a doubt that he recognized Joe Brill as soon as he saw him. Sandy was not yet across the threshold, but because of his height he could see Eichbaum's countenance; and anybody could read it.

Nothing was said until the prisoners had been lined up at the foot of the bed, and by this time a change had taken place in Eichbaum's expression. He looked anxious, uncertain, and confused. His glance shifted from the prisoners to the detective beside him and then to the inspector who was beginning his formal question—if anything that Berry ever did could be called formal.

Sandy saw plainly that Eichbaum was stumped. He didn't know what to say. Why not? The natural explanation was that he didn't know what the police wanted him to say; and in fact that was a part of the trouble. From headquarters the inspector had telephoned to Detective Lafferty at the hospital, to this effect:

"Tell Eichbaum to watch his step. Say to him that I'm bringing up two men who are under suspicion, but I don't believe they're guilty. It's important that Eichbaum shouldn't identify them unless he's dead sure. Make him understand that he doesn't have to answer positively 'Yes' or 'No.' If they look like the right men he can say so, and let it go at that."

Sandy knew nothing of this, but he saw that Eichbaum had been tipped to be careful. Otherwise he would certainly have identified Joe Brill, but it seemed almost equally certain that he couldn't honestly have identified Sandy.

When a man's mind is possessed by a single fear it colors to its own ghastly hue the face of everything that happens. Sandy thought: "This means that Dave Lang did it, and Eichbaum is misfaking Joe for Dave. That's easy. But Steve and I don't look so much alike. I'm too old, and this man knows it."

For what seemed a full minute after the inspector asked his question, Eichbaum made no response. He was partly occupied with being sorry for himself, a very sick man; breathing heavily with a groaning sound—a rather babyish exhibition but not unusual with men of his type. Finally he said:

"I think these are the men—especially him." He pointed at Brill. "He looks just like the man that shot me. As for the other one, I don't feel so sure. I didn't notice him so much. He stood back, and didn't mix into it. I wouldn't swear to him." He indicated McKenna. "And, anyhow, I'd rather not speak too positive, now."

"You understand," he added, "I'm in bad shape. I've got one of those headaches that makes you partly blind. I'm seeing only half your face this minute, inspector."

"That's not uncommon," Berry said. "It's a symptom of what we call migraine. You'll get over it."

"Tell the doctors to give me more attention," the sick man said. "Then let me look these birds over again, when I'm right."

"I will, if necessary. And by the way, these men admit being at the theater last night. Which one of them bought the tickets?"

Eichbaum stared, moving his half-blind eyes in a vain attempt to get a focus.

"I don't remember seeing either of them," he said at length.

The inspector seemed perfectly satisfied with this reply, as with what had gone before and what came afterward. He made no effort to urge the witness to be more definite on any point. Nothing important was added, with one exception in which Sandy was peculiarly interested. This was brought out by the inspector's query:

"You described the tall bandit as a young fellow. Just what did you mean?"

"Well," Eichbaum spoke with hesitation, uncertain how deeply the inspector really wanted him to go into that matter, "I'd have said he was younger than this man"—Sandy of course—"and maybe not quite so big."

At this answer Sandy saw Brill's fingers take a harder grip on the white rail at the foot of the bed. Since they were lined up there this was the first sign he had given that he was alive. It suggested to Sandy the idea of making use of him.

A doctor had come in, and there was a confused movement in the crowded room. While this shuffle was in progress Sandy got Joe's eye, and attempted to communicate, partly by signs and partly by lip action. The message was: "Help me make a break. Block them in hall just before turn."

He doubted that Joe got it, or had brains to understand it, or the sand to act on the instructions. Besides, why should Joe get in bad by assisting an escape when all he knew about the plan was that its success would be of no advantage to himself?

But Sandy was desperate, ready to try anything whatever. Eichbaum hadn't cleared them; he had merely given the inspector what he wanted—an excuse for holding them. They would be taken back to headquarters and locked up. Within a few hours Steve would come down, and as soon as

the police had looked him over he would be in trouble. Of course, if he was guilty he might be afraid to show himself, but in that case he would be depending on Dave Lang for guidance; and Sandy would almost as soon see him dead. The main thing was to get to him quickly and find out what the truth was, and what could be done to keep him wholly clear.

Sandy had edged toward the door, and no one had interfered with him. He was watching for handcuffs, and if he had seen a motion that looked like reaching for them he would have made a break to pass the one who was between him and the hall.

This man took him lightly by the arm, when the inspector gave the order for the start. Another detective followed with Brill, at a slower pace. Glancing back over his shoulder Sandy saw that he and his guard had quite a lead when they made the turn.

Next moment there was the sound of some small difficulty behind them. In fact Joe Brill had dropped his hat, and had managed to halt the whole rear part of the procession while he was clumsily picking it up.

Sandy couldn't see what was taking place around the corner, but it seemed to promise delay. Quick as a flash he tripped the detective and laid him flat on his back. A hard fall, too; the man's head hit the floor with a hollow crash, and for a few seconds he didn't know whether he was on this earth or in a star cluster of the Milky Way.

It was a better success than the tall wrestler had hoped for, though he had been sure that he could put his man down. The question had been whether the victim of the trick would be able to draw his pistol and shoot before Sandy could reach the stairs that wound around the elevator shaft.

On those stairs he would be safe from bullets, but he hadn't intended to go down more than one flight. His plan

was to elude pursuit by breaking for a fire escape on the rear of the building with whose architecture he happened to be familiar.

The descending stairs were on the far side of the shaft, and Sandy never reached them. He changed his whole plan between two strides of his long and agile legs; and one more stride carried him through the open door of the shaft and into the empty car which stood waiting, while its attendant was doing an errand in one of the rooms.

The elevator was of the automatic sort. Having shut the door Sandy pressed the button marked B, and the car slid smoothly down toward the basement.

The shaft was sheathed and all the doors were solid, not grilles. The fugitive was invisible during the descent, and nobody had seen him board the car. He was in the basement before the police had learned that the car had been at the fourth floor or that the elevator had in any way aided the escape.

In the basement he encountered only one person, a menial who was entirely ignorant of what had been going on upstairs, and did not dream that this tall, handsome gentleman was a criminal in flight. Without the slightest opposition Sandy made his way to a rear court and then to an alley leading to the street above the one on which the hospital has its frontage.

An empty taxicab appeared as if by special appointment, and when Sandy stepped aboard he was assured of several hours of freedom at the least.

He would have time to see Steve, hear what he had to say, tell him what to do in order to keep out of this mess. It is true that Sandy's conduct in the last few hours—or his whole life, for that matter—did not highly recommend him as a prudent adviser. He partly acknowledged that, and also the fact that he was not at his best; but he must do what he could with his brains as they

were. Their condition was queer, and he knew it. No matter what he started to think of, he would drift away from it within a few seconds and would find himself damning Joe Brill for not telling him that Dave Lang was in town.

He must quit dwelling on that; there was no use in getting so hot about it. Lang might not have found Steve. There was no real proof of it. Probably his worst fears were as wild as hop-head stuff.

The kid would tell him that he had been at home last night, studying his books. The people with whom he lived would know that he was in, and would give him an alibi—if it had to come to that. But all the same Joe Brill ought to have warned him about Lang. And there was Sandy back again to the thing he couldn't get out of his mind.

Steve had a room on One Hundred and Eighteenth Street, in an apartment with a family of nice people. He had wanted to have a place of his own, to which Sandy could come. But Sandy hadn't thought it best for a young fellow to be living alone. He wouldn't go there nor meet any of the kid's friends; he had even staked him to a private telephone in his room, so that they could get into communication directly, and the elder brother's voice wouldn't become familiar to a switch-board operator or to some person living in the apartment.

The kid knew that his brother had a past that might rise up against him, but not that he was still in the game. Sandy was supposed to be holding an even better job than the one he had got today. And it had made him feel mighty good, putting an end to the lie he had been telling the kid. But the going-straight stuff had vanished like a dream when the detective's head hit the floor of the hospital corridor. Assaulting an officer after being arrested for murder—a strange and sudden finish of a few hours' effort to lead an honest life.

The cab took Sandy just far enough to be out of the way and to make the ride natural. His real destination was any telephone booth, and he was praying that his brother might be at home. Both the prayer and the call were unanswered; it was quite evident that there was no one in the apartment where Steve lived.

Sandy waited ten minutes and tried again, with the same result. He must keep it up. Perhaps the booth was as good as any other place to hide, but he was crazy in it—too nervous to endure imprisonment in that narrow space. He was afraid to wait in the store or to spend the intervals in walking, but after a few minutes of indecision he took a chance with the street, as a move toward a safer way of handling the situation.

On some lots not far distant a group of little garages had been built for renting, and in one of them Sandy kept quite a nice coupé which he had picked up at a bargain. He had bought it so that he could ride with his brother, who wanted to be in a car all the time and was using this one for joy rides far more than Sandy supposed.

Sandy's right name did not appear on any records in connection with the car, and he was sure the police did not know he owned it. He had no fear of being trapped at the garage, and he believed that he could safely take Steve aboard the car somewhere, after dark. Meanwhile, he would be safer riding in it than walking.

The one thing that must be done was to get in touch with Steve before he learned what had happened. He wouldn't learn of it till he bought the latest extra, for the sporting news. Sandy counted on catching him at home between five o'clock—the present hour—and the time when he went out to dinner. It was no certainty, of course, but by what he knew of the kid's habits there was a good chance of warning

him in time and thus keeping him out of this trouble.

The walk to the garage was without incident; the jolt came when he opened the door. The car was out, and there was no guessing where Steve had gone with it or when he would bring it back. He might be twenty miles up the road, or just around the corner, or in the act of stopping in front of his own house. The last was not likely, but it was the only possibility in which there was any hope.

In a telephone booth in a little shop near the garage Sandy tried again and again and again during the next hour, and every nerve in his body was like a toothache before he got an answer—a single "Hello," then silence. To judge by one word it was a gentlemanly voice, like that of the man in whose apartment Steve lived. Two or three times when Steve was out this man had answered a call. Sandy was known to him by a fake name, of course, and was not now afraid to speak to him.

"Hello," he said. "Is Steve there?"

"No; he's gone out. Will you leave a message?"

Not a word came from Sandy; he was stricken to silence. The man at the other end of the wire understood that silence, and after only a few seconds he spoke again, no longer trying to disguise his voice.

"Hello, McKenna. Don't ring off. Listen. Your brother is under arrest. He's charged with that Crown Theater thing, I'm sorry to tell you. This is Inspector Berry speaking—as you know."

CHAPTER V.

STEVE ON THE GRILL.

SANDY'S head hit the telephone instrument. He didn't precisely know how this happened; he must have been all in for a moment. There was a hot spot on his forehead, and presently a drop or two of blood trickled down into

a corner of his eye. Meanwhile, for the most of the time, the receiver had been near enough to his ear for him to hear the inspector's voice, which was now saying:

"Hello. Are you getting me, McKenna? Don't be foolish. Take my advice."

Sandy didn't know what it was; he hadn't understood any of it. He said:

"Where is Joe Brill?"

"He's at the station, but he won't be held. There's nothing against him, nor against you, in regard to that business last night. You didn't know your brother was in it. And there's no doubt Brill was mistaken for that other man."

"What man?"

"Lang—David Lang. That's how I get it. Do you know him?"

"Did Brill give you his name?"

"No, no, no. Brill didn't say anything at all to me till after the arrests were made. Then he told me what you've been doing for your brother, and how you've been keeping away from him so as not to hurt him at the college. Brill says you made the break this afternoon because you were afraid your brother would hear you were in trouble, and would get his name into it. It was a raw situation, and I'm human enough to sympathize with you. If you come right in I'll fix your case so that the charge will never be pressed. You stood my man on his ivory, but he wasn't hurt. Where are you now?"

Sandy gave him the location.

"Well, waste fifteen or twenty minutes and then go to the station," the inspector said. "I'll be there by that time. I got your brother's address by telephone and came up to look over his things, but I haven't found anything that connects him with the crime."

"Why did you arrest him?"

"I didn't do it. It was done by men from downtown. They couldn't have been looking for your brother; nobody ever heard of him. He was found

with Lang, and that's all I know about it. I'll give you the facts at the station. Are you coming in?"

"Yes."

"That's good. And you can bank on what I've said. You'll have very little trouble, personally. You can go on light bail or even in custody of your counsel. So come right in, and see what you can do for your brother. Good-by."

His tone was friendly and sincere. Why not? He wanted Sandy to give himself up immediately, and he had offered the most attractive bait—the promise that Sandy would not be locked up, shut off from information and from action in his brother's interest.

But no wise man could doubt that there was something behind the inspector's amiability. Sandy saw no puzzle in it; he saw a bargain between the inspector and Joe Brill. It seemed clear that Joe had been subjected to a swift third degree after Sandy's escape, and had been scared into naming Dave Lang in order to save himself, thus bringing Steve McKenna into it, or at least putting him in danger. But before committing that act of treachery Joe, in a dazed attempt to right a part of the wrong, had refused to talk unless the inspector would promise to let up on Sandy.

Such a deal could be closed in ten seconds, if the inspector believed he was going to get the names of the right men in the Crown Theater case. The escape of an innocent man, held merely on mistaken suspicion, is a trifle in comparison with a murder mystery whose quick solution will bring credit in the department and applause from the public.

It was obvious that the inspector had not only made the bargain but had also promised to cover Brill's part in it. "No, no, no. Brill didn't say anything." Berry had been very prompt with that statement, but he hadn't put it over. The men who did last night's job had

made a perfect get-away, and it was nonsense to say that the police in a few hours had worked down to Dave Lang—a Western man unknown in New York, and with no criminal record that would give a line on him.

Lang was a crook, all right, but he had always managed to get away with it. So far as Sandy knew he had never been arrested; never had gone further than to talk it over with the captain, and wait in a police station till his troubles were adjusted through political influence. In a week's work the force wouldn't have found out that Dave Lang had ever been born.

His resemblance to Joe Brill was not a matter of common knowledge in the underworld. Sandy doubted that anybody in New York had known of it, except himself and his brother and the two men concerned. As to last night's job—if he did it—Lang would have been absolutely safe from every chance except the one that had gone against him; that is, the arrest of Joe Brill which had resulted in his crazy guess and his squeal.

Lang hadn't been caught through Steve; it was the other way about, according to the inspector's story. And Sandy couldn't see why Berry should have lied. The facts as to the arrest would be published; probably were in the papers now on the streets, downtown.

Evidently Steve had taken out the car in order to connect with Lang somewhere, and they had been caught together. This wasn't their first meeting, of course; Lang must have got hold of the kid some days ago. Probably Joe Brill had given him the address through mere stupidity or perhaps for money. Lang always carried a roll.

No other imaginable injury could have hurt Sandy so badly as this. It wrecked everything he cared about. If those two crooks had framed him for a twenty-year stretch he could have

stood it with a steadier mind. He was frantic with rage and helplessness.

Lang, under arrest, was beyond his reach, and how could he do anything to Brill? What would be the use of it? It would only get him into trouble, and cut him off from helping his brother. Leaning back against the wall of the booth and gripping the shelf under the phone till his nails bit into the wood, he struggled to free his mind from thoughts of vengeance. He swore that he would think of nothing but defending Steve till the kid was out of this danger.

They would need a lawyer. Sandy had a slight acquaintance with Parke Eldridge, known to the underworld as a good man; that is, a man who had successfully defended certain conspicuous transgressors who had seemed not to have a chance for their lives. He might be at home now; it was past six. After a few minutes of such thoughts as have been indicated, Sandy called the residence number and got Eldridge on the wire.

He was quite familiar with the Crown Theater affair, and immediately gave Sandy a new piece of information. Inspector Berry had been a friend of Louis Wiegand, the murdered manager. That accounted for some of the inspector's unusual conduct in the matter. He was personally interested, and the etiquette of the department would allow him a very free hand.

Eldridge expressed a doubt that Sandy could afford his services in such a case. He suggested a retainer of a thousand dollars, and came near getting it; but the client's readiness to discuss such a sum was so encouraging that it led to a reduction of the first payment to three hundred, cash, to-night. Though here was little chance of doing anything for the younger McKenna before to-morrow, the lawyer arranged for an immediate meeting with the elder brother. It was important to take all

possible advantage of Inspector Berry's promise of leniency. The expenses of the murder case would call for another transaction in diamonds, the lawyer foresaw, and Sandy couldn't do business if he was locked up.

From the proceeds of the last transaction he had a considerable balance in a Harlem bank, open till ten in the evening. The bank was far over on the West Side, and he was very foolish to go there. He couldn't afford to be caught anywhere except on a bee line to the station, unmistakably on his way to give himself up. Certainly there was something wrong with his brains when he took such a risk of releasing the tricky inspector from his agreement as to going easy.

But a fool's luck saves many a fool from the penalty of his folly. No cop and no dick saw Sandy in the cab that carried him westward to the bank and then eastward to the Hotel Gresham where he was to meet the lawyer, the exact place of the appointment being the writing room, likely to be empty at the dinner hour. By chance, however, a group of men stood in its doorway, discussing the arrests in the Crown Theater case.

"That young bandit is some good looker, take it from me," one of them said. "I rode up in the elevator with him when he went to the other one's room. The detectives were there then, and he walked right in on top of them. But there wasn't any fuss. I'm on the same floor, and I didn't know anything about it. I came down again and was here when they were taken away, each of 'em handcuffed to a dick. The young feller didn't like that very much, I'll say. He looked sick when he came out of the car, and faced the people here in the lobby."

"How'd they get onto them?" some one asked. "Was it only by description?"

"No. They had the older man's

name." The speaker lowered his voice, and glanced to where a round-faced Irishman with singularly narrow eyes was standing in a corner of the lobby—obviously the hotel detective. "Clancy told me, on the quiet, that the police must have been tipped by some crook that was wise. They phoned in to ask whether a man named Dave Lang was staying here."

The group moved away, and Sandy stood staring at the elevators, picturing the kid brother coming out of one of them, handcuffed to a detective. A cautious voice spoke in his ear.

"What's doing over there, McKenna? I don't see anything."

The lawyer had come up beside him, unperceived.

"You wouldn't see it if it was there," Sandy said; "not the way I do." He put a roll of bills into the lawyer's hand. "There's the three hundred. We'll waste no time here. I can tell you all I know on the way to the station."

He talked fast and clearly. The lawyer had no trouble getting what was said, but he was puzzled by the facts.

"It seems clear that Brill gave the information leading to the arrests," he said, "but I think he must have had some valid reason for suspecting Lang. What did he say to you, at headquarters?"

"He didn't say anything. He told me by signals that he thought Lang was the man, on account of the resemblance, and that Lang was in town. Brill was scared. The inspector had just given us the con that Eichbaum had identified us on the street. If that was so, Brill had been mistaken for somebody else. He'd been mistaken for Lang, out in Youngstown, though not in a criminal case. He happened to remember it, while reaching round in his mind for something to get him out of the hole. Besides, Eichbaum was supposed to have identified me, too, but he had described me as 'a young fellow.' That

suggested my brother, and Brill knew that Lang had been trying to get hold of him."

"Well, that partly explains it," Eldridge admitted; "but I suspect that Brill had more than that to tell the police. Otherwise he gave them only a guess that can't be called even an opinion."

"The inspector says he didn't tell them anything. But that's mere hokum. Still, it isn't possible that Brill could tell them anything about the hold-up. I was with him last evening till within half an hour of the time it happened."

"Half an hour," the lawyer said. "As little as that, eh? And you don't know where your brother was."

"I know where he wasn't, but it's just where Eichbaum will say he was. I've sized that bird up, Mr. Eldridge. He has no true memory of those holdup men, and he'll identify any two that are shown to him, if the police tell him they're guilty."

"Even that won't convict them, if unsupported," Eldridge said, "unless they are guilty. If they are, it depends on how your brother stands the third degree. The older man won't break down, but the kid—as you call him—hasn't had any experience."

"Not of this kind, and it was my chief idea in life to prevent him from ever getting it."

The tone in which Sandy said this penetrated the lawyer's sordid crust and got to something decent in his interior. He took Sandy by the arm, and with really kind intentions extolled his own professional skill. He would win this case, if the young prisoner didn't weaken. Barring a confession he didn't see how he could lose.

They were near the station now, and Sandy saw his car parked in front of it. Evidently Steve had ridden in it to the Gresham, and the police had taken charge of it. A patrolman and a de-

tective were standing beside the car, and they saw Sandy coming, but, recognizing Eldridge, they knew that it was a surrender, and merely watched the two men go into the station.

"They're questioning your brother now," the lawyer was saying. I shan't be allowed to see him, but there's a chance that you may be taken into the room where he is. Does he know any of that radio stuff that you and Brill work so well?"

"A little."

"Then give him the sign that you can get him out of this. Probably they won't let you speak to him, but for Heaven's sake don't fail to get it over to him that he's all right if he doesn't talk. It's the one thing needful, McKenna. Don't fail to try it, and don't make a flop of it."

"I'll do it," Sandy answered. "But he can't confess. He didn't do the thing."

The lieutenant at the desk was waiting for Sandy, with orders to cut out all formalities and send him to the inspector at once. A detective took him in charge and led him to a small room where Inspector Berry sat at the table, alone.

"Hello, McKenna," he said, dismissing the detective with a gesture. "Sit down. I'm going to let you see your brother; he'll be brought to this room in a few minutes. And his life depends on what will take place right here. Tonight two courses are open to him, but to-morrow there'll be only one, and it leads to the chair.

"I don't need a confession," he went on. "My case is strong enough without it. I want it for the boy's sake, and yours. I'm sorry for you both—men of the best blood in the world, and look what you've done with yourself. Did you see your brother at the Crown last night?"

"No."

"Well, I didn't suppose **you** did, but

he was there, he and Lang. They're the men that usher girl saw."

"Which girl?"

"The blonde, but it wouldn't matter if it was the other one. The men admit that they were there, in a loge on the left side of the balcony. That's just where I knew they must have been, in order to have the best chance to hide. Don't interrupt with questions, McKenna. There isn't time. I'm giving you the case as it stands.

"The men were taken to the hospital and Eichbaum identified them. He was positive about it, and his evidence can't be attacked. As for his hesitation in regard to you and Brill, that's natural. It's fully accounted for by the double resemblance, a very unusual thing."

Inside Sandy's body pieces of ice seemed to be slipping down around his heart. Steve must have admitted having been in the theater with Lang last evening. This couldn't be a trick of the inspector's; it would be exposed within half a minute after Steve was brought into that room.

Sandy thought: "It's true that they were there, but they've denied the hold-up. What are the chances? A good alibi would be their only defense, and they can't have it. Steve would give it to me right away, and I'd tell him to fight. The inspector knows that. His case must be even stronger than he says it is, or he'd never expect me to help him break my brother down."

There was a sound of footsteps in the adjoining room, as of several men who halted close to the door.

"Your brother's coming," Berry said. "Be wise for him, McKenna. Remember, Eichbaum puts all the worst of it on Lang. If the boy behaves right, he'll get a merciful sentence. And there's parole and pardon to hope for. He might be free in a few years, while young enough to start life all over again."

There was a moment's pause while

Sandy tried to steady his mind for the awful decision he must make within the next few minutes. Then the door opened and the kid brother came in. He looked pale and dazed, but his head was up; he was still fighting. McKenna would have died for him, right then, if it would have saved him.

When he saw Sandy mere habit made his face brighten for a moment, and then the light went out of it as he stopped short with a jerk of the spine. He tried to meet Sandy's eyes and couldn't. Guilt and shame were written all over him. He took his brother's hand with a hesitating, lifeless movement; reeled to one side and fell into a chair.

"You're all right, kid," Sandy was saying. "I know you didn't do it. You're in hard luck for a minute, but I'll get you out. Just keep your nerve."

He went on in this strain, not daring to stop; merely trying to prevent Steve from speaking, for the boy looked as if one sentence from his lips would destroy him. The inspector's advice had been scared out of Sandy's mind by the very thing that might more reasonably have inclined him to follow it. His only thought was to save his brother from the immediate and visible danger—the weakness that comes from nausea of the mind poisoned with a guilty secret.

Inspector Berry hadn't uttered a word nor made a movement, even a wink. He was studiously attentive, watching young McKenna as a scientist observes the action of a piece of new apparatus. He had devised this meeting of the brothers, knowing that the younger was under great obligations to the elder and would be likely to break down from a sense of shame for his damnable abuse of the opportunity that had been given him to make something of himself. It was a typical trick of Berry's, and he seemed to be satisfied with the way it had worked.

"That'll do, McKenna," he said at

length. "You're trying to cover his break, but you can't. Let him talk and tell the truth. Be quick about it, young man. It's your only way to get anything for yourself. And you won't be hurting Lang; his finish is settled already. Consider saving your own life. It's all you can do."

Sandy opened his mouth to utter a warning, but was silenced by the sudden change in the kid brother's behavior. He straightened in his chair and turned a fighting face toward the inspector.

"Mr. Lang had nothing to do with that holdup," he said. "He can prove that he was in his room at the hotel when it happened."

"Somebody was there, but it wasn't Lang."

"Who else could it be? He was stopping there alone."

"The trick of planting a confederate in your room to create a fake alibi is too old. We don't fall for it here. Lang has been identified by Eichbaum——"

"He's a liar!" Steve broke in. "And he was off his nut, besides. And you know it. You couldn't make the doctor say that Eichbaum was right in his head."

The inspector didn't contradict this. He took it with his habitual calm. He never seemed to have any personal feelings, or, at least, his own didn't interest him. He was always occupied in observing the emotions and behavior of others. Seeing that Sandy wanted to say something, he politely gave him the chance.

"Were you and Lang at the theater, kid?"

Steve faced his brother, but only for a moment. His glance drifted away as if he saw pictures in the air.

"Yes," he said; "but we didn't stay long. I saw you and Brill come in downstairs, so we got out. I knew you'd roast me for getting in with him again. Of course, I ought to have told

you. And you wouldn't know Lang now, Sandy. He's changed entirely since his wife's death."

Lang was supposed to have been very fond of his wife. Her death was news to Sandy, and his face showed it.

"She was killed in a motor accident —" Steve paused, shuddering, as if the accident was a personal experience which he recalled with horror.

"Where was it?" Sandy asked.

"In Youngstown, two or three weeks ago. They were out together and she was driving—not going fast, but she skidded into a tree and it killed her. He wasn't hurt at all. But he couldn't live there any more. He sold out his business as soon as he could and came East. He's all broken up, but awfully decent. He wanted to help me."

"With money?"

"Yes." The word was like a groan. "He lent me a little. I'd been running too wild. I owed money, and I couldn't ask you for any more."

Sandy didn't dare pursue that subject any further.

"Forget it, kid," he said. "It's all right. I'll fix everything."

The inspector struck in, addressing Steve.

"Where did you go after leaving the theater?"

"Back to the hotel with Lang."

"You didn't go in?"

"No. I said I was going home to study. But I met a man, and we went off"—a moment's hesitation—"for a walk."

"Who was this man?"

"I won't tell. I won't bring anybody else into this."

"How can you help it? The man is your alibi. Do you mean to say he's going to keep still, and let you stand for this murder?"

After agonized thought Steve answered:

"That's up to him."

"And how about Lang?" the inspec-

tor demanded. "You and he are charged with committing this crime together. Are you and your other friend going to cover your alibi and leave Lang in the hole?"

"Mr. Lang doesn't need any help from me," Steve said. "He has an alibi of his own, and it's good, and you know it. You'll have to let him go."

"Who was with him?" Sandy asked.

And the inspector obligingly gave the answer:

"Nobody. Lang claims that he was in bed at half past eleven, reading aloud out of the Bible—the only book in the room, of course. A woman in the next room rapped on the wall for quiet, he says, and she backs him in that story. She was brought over here, and they tried her with Lang's voice, and she said it was the one. We're looking her up. Maybe she's a friend of his."

"She never saw him," Steve protested.

"So they both say," the inspector readily admitted; and then his manner changed, and for about fifteen minutes he stabbed the prisoner with keen, swift questions.

Nothing of importance was extorted, nothing that resembled a confession; and yet Sandy was in constant terror throughout the scene. Instinct and experience told him that the kid brother stood every moment on the brink of a ruinous disclosure. Many times he was slipping, but he didn't go over.

It was hard to see what was holding him, unless it was loyalty to Dave Lang. If so, it couldn't be too strong to suit Sandy; he sat there praying for more power to this devotion of his brother's toward that crook whom he himself had hated. Here was one of those ghastly jokes that fate plays.

Whatever the reason might be, the kid brother stuck on the edge of the abyss until the inspector suddenly gave up trying to push him into it. He gave a signal that brought an officer from

the other room. Through the open door Sandy saw Dave Lang being badgered by half a dozen detectives. One of them was shooting a question at him, but Lang had ceased to listen. All his attention was concentrated on trying to see Steve and judge of what had happened. Deadly anxiety was written on his pale face.

The officer came forward to lead Steve into the larger room. Sandy took his brother's hand saying:

"Keep up your courage, kid. I'll see you to-morrow."

"No," the inspector said. "You've had your chance to-night. I gave it to you and you wasted it."

He called in an officer who had been waiting in the corridor, spoke a few words to him in a whisper, and then went into the room to which Steve had been taken.

Sandy stared at the closed door. How would his brother stand it, all night long? Question after question, the same thing over and over again till he would lose all sense of the meaning of words, his own or those of his tormentors. Probably he had had no food and would get none till morning—if he lasted as long as that without telling whatever it was that he was holding back with so loose a grip.

Nothing that could happen to Sandy seemed of any consequence, and yet he must have his freedom for his brother's sake. As to what would be done with him, he got no information from the officer who led him away.

"The lieutenant will tell you about it," was all the man would say.

CHAPTER VI.

"COME CLEAN, JOE, OR DIE."

THE inspector's word was made good, and Sandy was released in custody of his counsel. To lock him up would have been cruel, and to require bail would have been ridiculous. Nobody

in New York was less likely to run away.

When the police told him he could have his car he got into it and would have sat there for hours, waiting for his brother who would be taken down to headquarters at the close of the questioning. Ordered to move on, Sandy parked as near the station as possible, and watched the door.

Eldridge had gone to the Gresham for a very late dinner and for information about Lang's witness. Returning, he said that she was an actress, out of a job and in debt to the hotel. Clancy, the house officer, said that Lang could easily have learned how the woman was situated, and could have bought his alibi for a hundred dollars or less.

"But there seems to be nothing against her character," the lawyer added; "and she's pretty and as cool as a fish. She'll make a good witness before a jury."

Eldridge seemed to have started with the assumption that his clients were guilty of the murder, though he was careful not to say so in plain terms. To Sandy's surprise, however, he was not at all worried as to the outcome of the grilling now in progress. He had confidently prophesied that Steve would stand the gaff, as soon as he had heard Sandy's account of the scene with the inspector.

"Your brother's story of having met a friend may not be true," he said, "but he knows somebody who will probably stand for it. These wild-hawk college boys will do anything. And why not? They go out for a joy ride, and every one of them has prepared for it by breaking the law to the extent of a bottle of gin. The one that drives the car is drunk at the wheel, contrary to law. He breaks the traffic ordinances all the way out to a road house which has been chosen because drinks can be had with supper. Coming home the party sings and pets while speeding sixty miles

an hour, every man risking not only his own life for no sane reason but also the lives of young women, his guests of whose safety he is responsible. And if a so-called accident happens they run away if they can, and if that's impossible they perjure themselves as to the facts. How can such a generation grow up with any respect for law or for the obligations of an oath?"

Eldridge himself seemed to have got a couple of cocktails while he was away, and as they had gone down into an empty stomach they had produced a maximum effect. Under ordinary circumstances Sandy would have got a good laugh out of this distinguished shyster's oration on respect for law, but now he saw in it only a false hope.

"Steve has no such friends," he said. "He hasn't got in with any wild gang."

"He's your own born brother, McKenna, and there's wildness in the blood." The lawyer glanced around with somewhat misty eyes, and then put his head into the car and said guardedly: "Let us assume for the argument's sake that Lang and your brother are guilty. Then, from the facts as to Lang's alibi, I should suspect that he had advised Steve to get one for himself, and that Steve hadn't quite managed to arrange it. But his allegation as to meeting a friend assures us that he still believes it may be done; and his hope of that, combined with loyalty to Lang, will carry him through the night without a breakdown.

"When I have my talk with him he'll name half a dozen of his friends who may be in position to testify as to his movements last evening. And that reminds me that I shall need money for use in investigating these witnesses. You'd better be prepared to let me have about a thousand dollars. When can you give it to me?"

"As soon as I go crooked enough to buy this perjury," Sandy answered, "and that'll be to-morrow, I suppose."

"Let's hope the boy is telling the truth," Eldridge said. "He may have reasons for concealing the name of the man he met after leaving Lang. And by the way, it's lucky they didn't deny having been in the theater. They'd have been caught on that. The police knew of it before the arrests were made."

"How did they know?"

"From Brill. If your brother saw you, Brill might have seen him. No doubt he did, but he kept still for fear of trouble between you and Lang. You'd have gone right upstairs, wouldn't you?"

Sandy answered with hysterical swearing. It crazed him to think of Brill's sitting dumb when one word would have resulted in parting Steve from Lang in time.

"Brill was afraid you'd make him go along with you upstairs," the lawyer said, "and he's a man who keeps out of trouble, even so small a matter as a row in a theater."

This was true. The surest way to get Joe's goat was to draw attention to him in a public place. Sandy had often laughed at him for this, not dreaming that disaster would ever come of it. But any weakness may be the cause of tragedy, if by chance a strain is thrown upon it in a crisis.

Eldridge was continuing to talk, but Sandy didn't hear much of it. His thoughts were centered on Joe Brill who could so easily have saved Steve from this ruin but had let it happen and had then betrayed him.

After the lawyer was gone Sandy could hardly fix his attention on anything real, even on watching the station house. Incidents of last evening that had seemed trivial at the time now crowded on his memory with the vividness of dreams. He seemed to be standing in the lobby, looking across at Joe buying the tickets—a most unusual act on Joe's part, though he was always

ready to put up the money if some one else would do the talking at the window. Then they were in their seats and Sandy's imagination was showing Brill looking up at the loges on the left side of the balcony.

Brill rarely looked up at anything, but now Sandy could see him doing it, and always in just the same way. It seemed as if this must be a true memory of the moment when the speechless fool had held Steve's life in his hands and had let it be destroyed.

Also there was a bit from "A Crook's Life" that haunted Sandy. The crook shot a worse scoundrel than himself, a traitor to the gang, doing this murder in a scene far better played than any other in the piece. The impossible hero-villain who did the shooting became human for a little while, and the spectators in the darkened house were with him in his crime—all tricked into the attitude of accomplices.

And now that act of retribution was repeated again and again in Sandy's tortured mind. He himself began to get into the picture the rôle of the avenger, and he felt the sympathy of a great crowd that urged him on.

Really he was faint from lack of food, and sick from the dregs of boot-leg liquor. Under such conditions any man might dream, but he would probably begin by going to sleep. Sandy had something in his mind that murdered sleep, so he dreamed awake.

In the midst of it he became aware of a police motor wagon that went past him toward the station. In fact it was coming for the prisoners accused of last night's murder, and they must have been waiting in the front room. Before Sandy could get near enough to see plainly his brother and Lang were led out and put into the van, each of them shackled to a detective.

Sandy was out of his car, trying to cross the street afoot, but he had stepped too hastily into a small tangle

of traffic. It closed round him so tightly that he couldn't sift through in any direction; and while he was held in this jam he saw Joe Brill come out of the station. That man's release at such a moment seemed like blood money paid promptly at the finish of his job. The police wagon carrying away the victims had barely started.

Sandy's soul was in that wagon, suffering everything the kid brother suffered. And there was Joe Brill sneaking home to bed. It came to Sandy that the fellow on the screen last night had shot a man for less than this, and everybody thought he did right.

The jam was breaking up, and Sandy got across. He was leaving his car to look out for itself. All he cared about was to overtake Joe Brill. But what had become of him? The heavy figure in the old black suit had disappeared. The vanishing act was one of Joe's specialties.

There could hardly be a doubt as to where he was going; he had started in the direction of home. Sandy hurried, but didn't catch his man. Joe must have turned south at the first corner. The distance was the same either way, and Sandy kept on going, sure that he would beat Joe to the house.

Apparently he did it; there was no light at the two windows of the third floor, north—Joe's sitting room. Sandy watched from the other side of the avenue, standing in a doorway so that Joe shouldn't see him first, and disappear again. It was the doorway of a sort of pawnbrokers' sales shop, and though it seemed to be closed at that late hour there was a push button which would bring you a man who would sell you a gun or even a set of tools if you were known to him.

Sandy waited ten minutes, a queer kind of excitement making his head hot and his brains numb. Meanwhile, all the guns in the shop behind him were talking. They said: "Come in and buy

one of us. You don't know what may happen when you go against that obstinate dumb-bell. You may have to scare the truth out of him, or take the con. And you've got to know what he's said, for your brother's sake. Don't let him put this thing over and then lie out of it."

At the end of ten more minutes it was plain that Joe had not been headed for home. Quite possibly he would lie low, for fear of getting what he deserved. He might hide out with a yegg known as "Big Sin," a Greek who looked like a Chinaman and who lived in a little house some distance west. That settled it. If Sandy was going to have trouble in Big Sin's place he stood to need a gun.

This good excuse gave wonderful relief to Sandy's mind, as if something had suddenly come out right, ending a hard nerve strain. He felt better than at any time since that fatal moment at headquarters when Brill had poisoned him with the thought of his brother's being caught by Dave Lang again and led into a murder.

He bought the pistol and some cartridges, and then stood in the doorway again, watching Brill's dark windows long enough to make sure that the informer hadn't come home while he was in the shop. Satisfied as to this, he walked westward to the house where Big Sin used to live, and found nothing but three cellars not quite cleared of wreckage—the site of a new building.

On the way back he reasoned that if Brill was going to hide out with somebody he would sneak home first and get some things, but he wouldn't turn on a light while he was finding them. He'd be fool enough to bank on the dark windows to bluff Sandy off. It would be worth while to go up anyhow and kick in the door; and Sandy was just entering the house when he became suddenly aware that he was followed. There was

a man right on his heels, though he hadn't known that any one was near.

He wheeled and backed away against the inner door of the vestibule, reaching awkwardly for his unfamiliar weapon. If he had needed it in serious gun play he would have died without firing a shot; but the other man was his good friend Detective Aloysius Delavan.

"Pass me that rod, my boy," he said. "It's what I was after."

"How did you know——"

"I saw you go in to buy it. I've been tailing you from near the station."

"Did Berry put you onto me?"

"No; 'twas my own idea. I happen to see you starting after Joe Brill, very excitedlike."

"Where'd he go?"

"Across the street away from me while you crossed toward me. But I saw that you thought you were following him, and that you meant to close in on him here. You're all wrong, Sandy. Brill didn't do what you think he did."

"Don't tell me that, Al. You've always been straight with me. I won't ask you for inside stuff on Brill; but don't hand me the con."

"Not me. You can bank on what I'm telling you. Brill didn't squeal on your brother. He's the last man that would do it. Give me the gat."

Sandy obeyed. This was an affair between friends and he wouldn't go to the big house for carrying a pistol without a license; but Delavan was a police officer all the same, and he was going to have that gun.

"I hear you've got Eldridge on the case," he said. "He's some blood-sucker; he'll bleed you white and then ask for more. And how'll you get it?"

"I'll give you one guess."

"One's all I need. And you'd really laid off of all that. Now listen, Sandy; don't you turn a trick to pay that shyster till you've had a talk with me. I know

how to take some of the avarice out of him. How much money have you got now?"

"Enough to give my brother a year in college—maybe two. And where is he now? And who put him there?"

"Not Brill. I'm telling you to forget that, Sandy."

"All right. I'll say I will, and you'll say that Brill didn't squeal. And we'll all be lying, you and I and Joe."

Sandy laughed, and then struck the wall of the vestibule with his fist, so that it was a wonder he didn't break his knuckles.

"This is hell," Delavan said under his breath. And then, aloud: "I can't let you go on like this. I've seen this sort of stuff many a time, and it's bad medicine. You're falling for a fixed idea of murder, Sandy. And you're no moron; you're an educated man, capable of realizing it in time."

"Do you mean I'm crazy? How would you feel, if this had been done to you? But at that I didn't intend to hurt Brill; I was only going to scare the truth out of him."

"You won't get it. Not a chance. Crazy? You'll be all of that, when you try to get the truth about this case out of Joe Brill. Can't you take my word that——"

"Oh, what's the use, Al? I don't blame you. The inspector made a deal to cover Joe, and you can't blow it. I'd be a fool to think you'd risk your tin merely to relieve my mind."

"I'd lose my tin rather than be responsible for your committing murder, Sandy. Let me think about it. We'll walk a while." He took Sandy by the arm and led him out of the vestibule. "You haven't asked me how Steve got along to-night."

Sandy stopped short.

"Were you there?"

"I was there during the last of it," the detective said. "Steve made no admissions, but he wouldn't tell where

he was or who was with him when the crime was committed. If he really met a friend, who would it be, do you think?"

"I don't know any of his friends."

"Not a single one? And you've no idea where he'd have been likely to go. I'd think he might have gone to your house, to satisfy himself that you hadn't seen him with Lang, or that Brill hadn't seen them and told you about it."

That touched the sorest spot in Sandy's soul. He began to curse Brill in tangle of words, meaningless except as they meant frenzy. He himself was surprised by the outburst, and he had wit enough to take warning from it. Delavan might look him up for his own protection.

"Hot air, Al," he said. "I feel better, now that I've got it off my chest." And he was careful not to say another word about Joe Brill.

Delavan was partly deceived. He accepted Sandy's promise to go home as soon as he had put up his car. In fact, the detective was overdue at the station, but his business there was done in two minutes, and he was sorry that he hadn't told Sandy to wait.

Sandy rode to the garage, found that he had forgotten to lock the doors, swung them wide, and started to back in the car. Looking behind him he saw by the light of the tail lamp a dark figure sitting on a stool in a corner. It was Joe Brill.

Before so slow a man as Joe could speak, Sandy was out of the car. Joe hadn't risen; he had raised his head only a little. His gray eyes were barely visible under the brim of his black derby.

Sandy stood still, breathing fast through his nose. He couldn't get his breath into the channel where it is useful for talking. Joe had to speak first.

"I was waiting, Sandy." A pause. "What d'ye know?"

McKenna didn't answer. He turned

his back to Joe and shut the doors of the garage. When he faced about he held an iron wrench, taken from a shelf.

"The engine's running," he said, "and you know what it'll do to us in this closed room. I won't let you shut it off or get out. You can come clean in the next few minutes, Joe, or you'll drop dead off that seat."

The hat brim hid the whole of Joe's face for a second or two; then his eyes appeared again.

"I would 'a' told you anyhow," he said. "I saw 'em, in the theater last night, and I didn't say nothing. I could 'a' cut my throat for that to-day."

"You squealed to Berry. You put him onto my brother."

Joe slowly turned his glance toward the quivering engine that was pouring death into the room.

"You can let her run," he said, "if you think I did that."

His strong hands were twined together in agony—eloquent, as skilled hands always are. Sandy saw his eyes once more, and they were glistening with tears. How could that hard-boiled animal be hurt so that he'd weep? Joe had once been falsely accused of counterfeiting coin, but it was not in human credulity to believe that he could counterfeit tears. These looked genuine to Sandy and he couldn't quite refuse to accept them.

He let the wrench fall, but that was all he did. The engine, however, was not affected by indecision; it kept right on running.

"Not only I wouldn't do what you think I did," Joe said; "I couldn't have done it. The tip wasn't given uptown, to Berry nor nobody else. It came into headquarters. It was there when we was at the hospital, before you made your break."

"How do you know?"

"It's in the papers—what time it was when headquarters began to call up the hotels, asking about Dave Lang."

Here was a statement which could be put to proof, and if it was true it let Brill out. Sandy turned, and kicked the doors wide open. One of them hit Al Delavan but it hid him; and Sandy was unaware that Al was watching him when he shut off the engine.

"I'm taking your word, Joe," he said, "but Lord help you if you've lied to me."

Brill didn't answer. He hadn't moved, except to let his head fall into his hands.

CHAPTER VII.

SANDY FINDS THE INFORMER.

DEHAVAN backed away to the sidewalk and called, "Oh, Sandy!" as if he had just arrived. In fact, he had been listening long enough to catch a few words and to hear the engine running in the small, unventilated room. He had a fairly clear idea of what had been taking place, and the picture was completed in his mind when he came to the doorway and saw the wrench lying on the floor where he knew that Sandy had been standing. He affected surprise, however, at the sight of Brill rising from his seat in the corner.

"Where'd you pick Joe up?" he asked. "Or was he waiting here?"

Sandy ignored the questions. He said:

"Joe claims that the tip on Lang and Steve came to headquarters while we were being taken uptown. Is that true?"

"It's what I hear."

"Who brought it in?"

"I couldn't say. I can find out tomorrow, and I'll tell you all I decently can."

Brill had come forward to where the others were standing in the doorway.

"I bet there wasn't any tip," he said. "You got it out of us, in that dark room."

"What do you mean, Joe?"

"You had a microphone on us."

"A microphone is a piece of apparatus," Delavan said. "Did you see any such thing in that room?"

"I know where it was—in that bum-looking chandelier. It was lowered down closer to us in the dark. I heard it."

"Then your ear beats any microphone, Joe, for you heard a sound that won't be made till to-morrow. The old chandelier'll be lowered down then, and thrown away."

"I bet it won't. It's no junk. With what's inside of it, it's worth many a dollar."

"You can have it, Joe, for nothing. But are you telling me that you and Sandy had suspicions as to this murder, and talked about it in that room?"

"We didn't talk at all. Give me your hand."

Brill held out his own left hand, and it was as firm as the chair arm at headquarters. On the back of it he placed Delavan's hand and made a telegraph key of his forefinger. From the brink of the eternal silence, where he had sat two minutes ago, Brill seemed to have brought back the gift of speech. His fluency amazed his hearers.

"Berry had just been stringing us," he said, "telling us that Eichbaum had identified us on the street. I telegraphed to Sandy: 'Could it be Dave Lang? He's a ringer for me, and he's in town.' Sandy answered: 'Was he looking for my brother?' And I came back with: 'Yes. He'd heard he was in Columbia college. But I steered Dave off, telling him Steve was in Boston.' If you got that, Delavan, you had plenty. You could find Lang in a hotel, and Steve in the college books. Am I right?"

"Yes, if we could get it, Joe; but—holy smoke!—don't you know that those signals were the faintest sounds you made? If they were amplified a million times—as they'd have to be—your hearts would hammer like two boiler shops, and the ticking of your watches

would be louder than a dozen riveting machines. Every time one of you breathed a little hard, it would sound like a gale in the rigging of a ship. And how about the movement of your other fingers, that weren't signaling? They'd be all mixed in with the sounds that had a meaning. The code stuff would be totally drowned. You might as well talk about hearing a man swallow a mouthful of water just as he hit bottom after going over Niagara Falls."

Brill dropped Delavan's hand, and looked up into McKenna's face.

"Is this straight, Sandy?"

"Yes; and it isn't half of it. You kept hitching around, making your chair creak; scraping your feet on the floor."

"You can figure Joe's feet as two avalanches coming down the side of Pikes Peak," Delavan said. "I'm not trying to be funny; I know what this trouble is to you, Sandy, and to Joe hardly less. I'm telling you most seriously that there's no possible way of hearing your signals separate from the other sounds. The inspector made a play, on the spur of the moment, to hear your conversation with his ear, but there was no scientific preparation to do it. How could there be? You were brought to that room by mistake, and as for the light, it went out by accident."

"If it did, you can give me that chandelier and I'll swallow it," Joe said. "It'll go down easier than what you're giving me about the light."

But he quit arguing, because he was beaten and knew it. Remembering what Sandy had said, just before their arrest, about new scientific tricks used by the police, he had tried to defend himself against the suspicion that he was the informer, by casting doubt on the secrecy of their communication in the darkened room. He had failed, and he saw that he was losing the little credit he had gained during the scene in the garage.

"What paper did you have?" Sandy asked him, as the three men went out to the sidewalk. "Where is it? I want to see the statement about the time when those calls were sent out."

Joe couldn't tell what paper it was. He said he had found a piece of an extra in the station house. It belonged to a bull who took it away from him.

Sandy made no comment on this. He said nothing at all; and Brill's characteristic silence had descended on him deeper than ever. Delavan walked between these two speechless men, and a van load of money wouldn't have hired him to leave them alone together.

The detective saw that the shock of this trouble had made McKenna a different person. That part of him which had been like a high-strung boy, full of the devil and a cheerful irresponsibility, had suddenly grown up or died. Anyhow, it was gone, and nothing was left but a haggard, desperate and embittered man who had been knifed and was hunting for the one who had done it. To Delavan this transformation was a more deplorable tragedy than the murder which had caused it; for McKenna was his friend while the dead Wiegand was only a case on the crowded annals of the police.

He steered the party to Brill's house and got rid of him, not without difficulty. Brill had developed a strong distaste for solitude. He didn't want to go up to his rooms and stay there all night alone with his thoughts.

As to the secret nature of those thoughts, the detective was extremely puzzled. In his opinion the silent man had something heavy on his mind, aside from the loss of Sandy's friendship and the pain that would naturally be caused by this affair and his unfortunate position in it. There wasn't a particle of evidence that he was hiding anything he knew as to last night's crime, yet Delavan vaguely suspected that he was. It was barely possible that Steve Mc-

Kenna had run to Brill, after the murder, for help he couldn't get from Lang and wouldn't ask of Sandy.

Knowing that Sandy had eaten nothing since noon, Delavan tried to lure him into a restaurant. Failing, he walked home with him and for three hours vainly tried to make him go to bed. For most of the time Sandy wouldn't even sit down; he walked the floor, thinking.

He had the same suspicion as Delavan—that Brill could tell more than the single fact that he had seen Lang and Steve in the theater. But Sandy believed that Brill had already told it to the inspector, while Delavan was positive that he hadn't.

"He's told it, and I've got to know what it is." Sandy said this over and over again, and, though he was naturally open minded and amiable in argument, he was now incapable of giving the attention necessary for the understanding of another person's opinion.

Rest was what he needed, and his chance of getting it might be better, and certainly couldn't be worse, if he were left alone.

"See me at headquarters to-morrow between twelve and half past," Delavan said in parting. "I'll be on the fourth floor at that time, and alone. It's likely I'll have something to tell you, and don't you go up against Joe Brill again until you've got my new dope. Will you give me your word on that?"

"Sure, Al," Sandy said, overcome with gratitude as he felt the clasp of his friend's hand. "I'll never forget how you've stood by me this awful day."

He choked, and shed tears, drunk with misery amid the wreck of his life which had contained nothing serious except his determination to keep the kid brother out of criminal associations. All the rest had been play stuff, but his devotion to his brother was a religion, as was proved by the exaggerated and scrupulous care he had taken to deny

himself the pleasure of Steve's society after bringing him to New York. And in one instant, in the dark room at headquarters, he had seemed to see his brother crash down past his own degraded level to the lowest depth beneath.

Delavan saw that it was useless to exact a promise from a man in that condition. Under the influence of some wild inspiration he might start for Brill's house within five minutes. Realizing this, the detective went there himself and watched outside till seven o'clock.

At that hour Joe came out, got a cup of coffee in a hole in the wall, and then went to Riverside Park, where he lay down under a tree. A hundred to one he hadn't been in bed.

Almost at the same time Sandy ceased walking the floor, and fell face downward on a couch. Within ten seconds he had sunk into complete unconsciousness, that profound and dreamless sleep which is the most effective cure for a mind shocked as his had been. This is true rest, entirely different from the tossing and vision-haunted slumber which is what a victim usually gets, perhaps for months on end.

Sandy didn't dream; his brains quit work and forgot their own existence. He waked like a newborn soul without a conscious past. In the first few seconds he couldn't have told his own name. And he was so refreshed that when the dreadful memories began to rush back upon him he had strength to meet them.

Freed from the fear that the mention of Lang's name had driven into him, he regained his natural tendency to see the best of everything. The defense of his brother took on a wholly different aspect. He saw the kid as innocent, a victim of hard luck and of somebody's false accusation. But he was by no means sure that the informer was Brill. Aghast at the memory of his own insane and murderous behavior in the

garage, Sandy took sides against himself and defended Joe, not much more reasonably than he had condemned him yesterday.

He would have tried to call Joe up, but it was already so late that he was in danger of failing to be in court when his brother was arraigned. He stopped for nothing but to read the morning paper and he reached the courtroom just as the prisoners were brought in.

He was not permitted to speak to his brother nor even to approach him near enough to hear much of the brief proceedings. He gathered only that Eldridge, who represented both the accused, got some sort of adjournment so that they were not formally held for the grand jury but were merely remanded.

It was plain that the situation had not materially changed since last night, as far as Steve knew. His manner was the same as it had been when Sandy saw him in the station house uptown. He looked hopeless, disgraced and thoroughly disgusted with himself, but he was hardening into his attitude of passive resistance, and now and then his handsome chin would be set to bite off the head of a spike.

Lang on the contrary seemed perfectly at ease. A mild and somewhat ministerial dignity enveloped him; and this, with his open and serenely fearless expression, greatly decreased his resemblance to Joe Brill. Occasionally he bestowed on Steve a sympathetic and encouraging smile, but for the most part he listened to the proceedings with respectful and confident attention.

The difference in the bearing of the prisoners was so extreme that no one could fail to see it. Spectators commented on it in Sandy's hearing.

"Lang's got a good alibi, I'm told," some one said. "But what use will it be if the young one lays down? They did the job together; that's sure. But Lang certainly looks as if he expected to get clear."

It seemed strange that Lang's confidence should have no effect whatever on Steve. By nature the kid was no quitter; his worst fault was that he could never see the need of leaving the door open behind him when he walked into a lions' den in search of a little excitement. But in the months since he had been in college he had seemed to be more prudent. Only once had he called on his brother to help him out of a scrape, and that hadn't been very bad, considering what the young crowd is doing in these days.

Watching him now, Sandy didn't lose faith in his innocence, but he lost all idea of understanding his situation merely by thinking about it. He would have to be told, and Eldridge was the only immediate source of information. Sandy got hold of him as soon as the prisoners had been taken away. But the lawyer was a disappointment.

"I had a very brief consultation with them both," he said, "but I got no new facts, except as to Lang's alibi, which is stronger than I supposed. Your brother knows all about it, and seems glad on Lang's account but not at all encouraged on his own. How can he regard their interests as separate? A successful defense of Lang would discredit Eichbaum as an identification witness, and that's all I should want unless the police have something up their sleeve.

"But I'm afraid they have. There's no doubt that they acted on specific information when they made the arrests. What was it? And where did they get it? Your brother won't even let Brill be mentioned as an informer. Why is he so sure? He couldn't give me a reason."

"He owes Brill gratitude," Sandy said; "likes him and always stands up for him. Steve wouldn't need any other reason for trusting Brill, and I'm feeling the same way myself to-day."

"Well, if it wasn't Brill, it was some-

body else and we've got to find out who he is and what he knows."

"I think I can get it," Sandy said. "Don't ask me how."

"I don't care how, but for the love of Heaven don't fail. Our defense, from the ground up, must be built to stand against this hidden witness, and if you know how to get me the gist of his testimony, go to it as a matter of life or death."

"Yes. I'm seeing it that way myself. But didn't my brother tell you anything at all?"

"Only what you know. After leaving Lang outside the Gresham he started home but met a friend. Who it was, or where they went, or what they did, he won't tell."

"Did he seem anxious to see me?"

"I asked him that, and his exact reply was: 'I dread it worse than the devil.' He wouldn't explain; but Lang tried to put a meaning on it, saying that Steve had been running a little wild in college, getting into debt and other troubles. Unfortunately, he paid some of his debts yesterday, and is known to have had considerable money. We shall claim that Lang lent it to him, but the prosecution will contend that it was a part of the Crown Theater loot.

"Well, I must run. I'm overdue in a trial court. See me at five this afternoon, whether you get anything or not. I doubt you can find me before that hour, but you'd better call up my office if you have anything important."

It would be useless to make any attempt to see Steve now, and unwise to call on Delavan in advance of their appointment. Sandy had time to take the first mouthful of food since yesterday noon. While eating he studied the newspaper reports which till then he had only glanced through. Certainly he and Joe Brill had no cause to complain; their innocence was unquestioned. Sandy's break at the hospital was treated as an act of romantic heroism.

He had risked his life to warn his brother, not with any thought that he was guilty but merely to conceal their relationship for the kid's sake.

The motive was fairly stated, and Inspector Berry vouched for it. He said that the police had no knowledge of the younger McKenna's existence until he betrayed himself by calling on Lang at the Gresham.

But Sandy's eyes happened to stray into the next column, and there, accidentally placed right alongside the inspector's statement, was an account of inquiry for Steve McKenna at Columbia. The time was given, and it was five minutes before Lang's arrest and nearly twenty before Steve's appearance at the hotel!

Here was positive proof that the tip to the police had included the names of both men. It was evident that Joe Brill had squealed immediately after Sandy's escape, and that the inspector had dispatched a detective to Columbia and had telephoned to the homicide bureau from which the calls had been sent out to the hotels.

At one minute past twelve Sandy entered headquarters, where he was met by a pal of Delavan's who escorted him to the fourth floor and through the room where he had sat in the dark with Brill. It was the same as when he had first seen it. The queer old funnel-shaped chandelier hadn't yet been taken down and thrown away.

The rooms beyond seemed to be laboratories. Sandy knew that there was a scientific school for detectives on that floor, and this might be a part of it. He caught a glimpse of one or two men, but they were busy and paid no attention to him, as he went on to a door which his guide had pointed out to him. It was ajar, and he saw Delavan, alone. He wore an apron full of holes burned by acids, and was working at a tile-topped desk on which lay a thousand-dollar bill. It wouldn't have

been there if he had heard Sandy coming.

"No use covering it up, Al," Sandy said. "I saw it, and of course it's the one that was found on Lang. This means that Wiegand was carrying a marked bill."

For a moment Delavan stared at him, astounded by the change in so short a time. Here was a sane, resolute and cold-blooded man—much more of a man than he had ever been before. His friend was glad to see him so improved, but on the whole he was more afraid of him than he had been last night. Certainly he wouldn't like to see this kind of a Sandy McKenna go hunting for Joe Brill.

"Shut the door, Sandy," he said. "Another soft-stepper might come along. Be sure the spring lock catches. I'm thinking we need privacy."

"As to this piece of small change"—he touched the thousand-dollar bill as Sandy came forward—"Wiegand was carrying three of them, as you may have seen in the papers, but we're covering the fact that one of them was marked with a little smear of blood. It wasn't Wiegand's blood; it came from a little scratch on the hand of the man who paid him the money. The bill found on Lang had no stain on it, but it looked as if it might have been cleaned; so they gave it to me—temporarily, I regret to say. I'm supposed to be a sort of expert on stains."

"Did you find anything? That's a raw question; you don't have to answer it. But whatever you tell me here, you can be sure I won't get you in wrong. I was crazy yesterday, but I'm different to-day. You see that."

"Yes," Delavan said; "I sure do. Have you seen Joe Brill?"

"Not yet."

"That's good. And now as to this bill, there's been no stain on it. I'm told there's a very small chance of its being identified some other way, but it

isn't the marked one they're looking for. I'm saying this to relieve your own mind. Keep it under your sandy thatch. And yet it's sure to come out; too many people know of it."

"You wouldn't trust Eldridge with it?"

"I wouldn't trust him with anything—except my life, if I'd killed somebody. Don't let that hurt you, Sandy. Your brother being innocent, I'd rather see an honest man defending him. Still, Eldridge is a smart lawyer."

"He is; and he advises me that we've got to know what Joe Brill gave the inspector. It was more than the two names and the story of seeing Steve and Lang in the theater. We can't shape our defense unless we have it. I'm a dog to beg it of you, Al, but that's what I'm doing."

"And I can't give it to you. Neither can Brill, but you'll never believe him."

"How can I?"

"That's right. How can you? Sandy, I swear to you, from my personal and positive knowledge, that Joe didn't give the inspector anything on your brother. It wasn't necessary. The police have known about him for months."

"That means Inspector Berry, of course," McKenna said. "He'd know it if anybody did."

"Yes. Certainly."

"Then your story doesn't go. When Berry questioned me in that room yesterday he'd never heard of Steve. The 'young fellow' in Eichbaum's description meant nothing at all to Berry at that time. You didn't hear what he said, but Brill did, and he'll never try to get out of this on the plea that the police were wise to any brother of mine."

That was a solid hit, and it won the game. Until the last minute Delavan had told the truth as nearly as he could; then in desperation he had tried to put over a lie, and it had been knocked out of the lot.

After such a break it would be useless to feed McKenna with denials and obscurities. Any statement would seem to be a lie unless it fully explained what had happened and was backed by proof. And of course Delavan was beaten more easily because of friendship, sympathy and fairness. He couldn't see it as right to leave two men in such a situation, where they would inevitably quarrel over a matter of desperate importance which neither of them could understand. On the basis of cold fact Sandy had trouble enough to bear, without this maddening delusion tempting him to make it worse.

The detective dropped off his apron and touched the badge on his vest.

"I'm going to risk my tin, Sandy," he said. "I certainly am a lost soul if what happens in this room in the next few minutes should ever leak out. You don't have to say anything. I'm taking your word from your eye. See that chair?"

It stood against the north wall. Sandy sat down. Delavan went to the window and closed the wooden blinds, but the room was lighted by a bright lamp over the desk where he had been at work. Returning, he leaned against a tall cabinet at Sandy's right.

"This is going to be a little rough, Sandy," he said, "but you want to remember that it merely happened that way. Look over there."

Sandy looked across at a bare space of wall which vanished almost instantly, along with everything else, in total darkness. He heard a faint whirring sound, and next moment he was staring at himself and Brill, sitting side by side as they had sat yesterday when there was not a ray of light by which either could see the other, or any human eye could spy upon them.

This was a picture of two blind men. In its bright illumination there was something horrible in the sight of his own groping movements as he touched

Joe's breast and then his lips and then his sleeve, following it down to find his hand. He saw himself send the warning message, but there were too many fingers twined confusingly together, and even with the help of memory he couldn't read even a word of what he was sending.

In fact, he couldn't keep his mind on it. The faces were what he watched, awe-stricken by the vividness, the naked truthfulness of their expressions. In the refuge of utter darkness they had stripped themselves of all restraint. It was like looking at emotions manifested not by flesh but by men's souls. It would never again be possible to think of Joe Brill as a man hardened so that he couldn't suffer.

The lips of both moved almost constantly, sometimes in mere writhings, sometimes in so plain an utterance of words that it was hard for McKenna to retain his positive knowledge of their silence. He saw himself repeat Dave Lang's name many times. He saw a sudden horror seize upon his own face which stared straight out of the picture, saying:

"My brother. My kid brother."

Imagination made the voice as clearly audible as Delavan's whisper in the darkness:

"Watch this, Sandy."

It was Joe Brill sending the long message about his dealings with Lang and the excuse for not telling that the man was in the city. Joe's futile striving to watch Sandy's face was a perfect picture of the torture of a blind man who must see, but can't. And at the same time he was contending with another kind of darkness—ignorance. His lips could be seen trying out the word "Columbia," before he tapped it out; and in this strange record of the police he was charged with having spelled it with two l's. But in that form it was just as good a clue to the whereabouts of Steve McKenna.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHO WAS STEVE'S FRIEND?

THE lights were on again, and yesterday's sorrows had vanished from the bodily eye. Delavan had come out of the cabinet in which he had operated the projector.

"You understand, Sandy, that I was under orders when I put the dark light onto you," he said. "Nobody expected such a result; we'd never heard of Steve. And as for you and Brill, I'd have bet my wife and children against a cat and three kittens that you had nothing to do with the Crown Theater affair."

"I don't blame you, Al; and you've certainly been my good doctor to-day. It was bitter medicine, seeing what I did, but it cured me of any grudge against Joe Brill. Gee! How he suffered for not warning me about Lang. After what he saw in the theater he'd been in misery all day."

"Why didn't he go to Steve?"

"He didn't know where he lived, and was afraid to ask me for the address. But in that dark room his nerve broke; he couldn't carry his secret any longer."

"He was scared, right enough," Delavan said. "It was lucky for Joe that he put the guilt on other men. His face alone would have put it on himself."

"How are these pictures taken?" Sandy asked. "Ultra-violet rays?"

"No. Infra-red—out of that old chandelier. Brill made a good guess. He was right when he said that it's no junk, with what's concealed inside it."

"You can't see these pictures as they're taken," Sandy said. "They're very small, of course, and I suppose it takes hours to develop them."

"Yes; but we have another apparatus for watching with the eye. The infra-red rays vibrate too slowly to be seen you know, but our machine speeds 'em up, so to speak. Something invisible comes into it, and something visible

comes out. Let it go at that; our method is secret, of course. Seeing in the dark is well-known stuff, but in our way of doing it we think we've got the world beaten and distanced.

"And it's very useful," he added; "far more so than we hoped. Our victims all talk to themselves—every cussed one of them, to date. And on our staff we've got the best lip reader on earth. No doubt we'll some day come across a man who doesn't move his mouth, but we'll never find a guilty one who won't do something that'll give him away, more or less."

"I believe you," Sandy said, with a shudder, "if their faces look like Joe's and mine."

"None of them look like yours," Delavan responded; "and even Joe Brill is a gentleman and a scholar compared to the average of our customers. But they can all fear, and all suffer. And they show their faces as Heaven sees them when they lie tossing on their beds at night, waiting for an officer to knock at the door. I pity the very worst of them."

Sandy stared downward in a slanting line, as if through several floors to where his brother was caged with creatures such as Delavan had described and pitied.

"There's no possible way that I can see him alone," Sandy said.

"Steve? Not at present. Wouldn't he talk to Eldridge?"

"No. Lang was there, but it can't be that he's holding out anything from Lang in particular. He won't tell anybody."

"You mean, who is his friend, the one he says he met after leaving Lang. Is there any chance that Brill knows who it was?"

"I don't see how he could. Joe never met any of Steve's friends in this city."

"Joe knows something; or maybe it's only a suspicion. I think the best thing

you can do is to talk with him—friendly, of course—and learn what's on his mind. Just tell him that you've got over your craziness, and have realized that he wouldn't do anything to harm Steve. Then ask him a few questions, and, if he backs away from them, come and tell me how he acted."

"Yes; I'll do that," Sandy said; and parted from Delavan as from the best of friends.

On the way out of the building his imagination rescued Steve by cunning and by violence. Any way was justified; nothing was wrong but to leave him in a cell. Who reads a story of an attempted escape and doesn't in fancy help him break the bars? A profound instinct strives within us to set free even a beast if it is caged. And this was a case of two brothers, truly of the same blood and spirit, as not all brothers are. When Sandy turned his back on that grim building he felt nerveless, cowardly and ashamed.

He went at once to Joe Brill's house but didn't find him there, nor a trace of him in three-hour search. It was then time to go to the lawyer's office, where he was told that instructions had been telephoned in that he should wait. And he waited, at last with only an office boy for company, till nearly seven.

Eldridge arrived looking like a faith-cure doctor treating a patient whose disease is imaginary and his money real.

In fact, he was well pleased to be featured in this case, not only because it was conspicuous but because Lang seemed to have a large sum of available funds, and had agreed to pay all charges for both clients. And this was a whispered private arrangement; there was no need of telling it to Sandy.

"I've been very successful, McKenna," he began. "I've discovered an extraordinary state of facts."

A good liar's emphasis on the word "facts" made Sandy's heart sink. It indicated that he was about to hear an

extraordinary fiction. But what of it, if it would help Steve?

"This is what happened on the night of the crime," the lawyer proceeded. "It makes clear not only what your brother did, but why he conceals it. After leaving Lang at the entrance of the Gresham he rode—probably on a bus—to a point on St. Nicholas Avenue which I will not specify; a good residence section."

"Why did he go up there?" It was Sandy's first and last interruption.

"Doubtless to call on somebody," the lawyer answered, "but before reaching his destination he met two young persons, Mr. A and Miss B. Neither is connected with Columbia, and his acquaintance with them is known to few of his more intimate associates.

"The two had been dining and dancing, and were in a somewhat hilarious mood. Miss B called attention to an automobile stand at the curb. She said: 'That's Johnny C's car; let's take a ride in it. Johnny's in that house playing poker, and he won't come out till it's time to fall over the milk bottles. Anyhow, I know Johnny and he's a good sport. He'll stand for anything I do.'

"Mr. A said: 'Great-o! I don't know Johnny very well, but if you say he's all right, he is. Let's go up the road and have a bite of supper.' Your brother, being entirely sober on this occasion, tried to dissuade the others, but meanwhile Mr. A had discovered that the car was unlocked. At least he got into it and started the motor.

"Miss B climbed into the tonneau, saying that she would take a nap. Mr. A urged your brother to come along. A brief argument ensued, and Mr. A said he would go on without him. He admits that he is unfamiliar with that make of car, and has had little experience in driving any kind.

"Your brother noticed Mr. A's inexperience—more dangerous because of his condition—and jumped on the run-

ning board as the car started. He said, 'I'll let no girl take a nap behind you, at forty miles an hour,' or words to that effect. He succeeded in getting hold of the steering wheel, but Mr. A wouldn't give up the driver's seat and the car kept on going. They were nearly a mile from the starting point when your brother gained full control.

"There had been some violence, and it was followed by a reconciliation. The details are uncertain, but the essential fact is that they did not turn back. Just how your brother was influenced I don't know. There were two flasks of whisky in the party, but Mr. A thinks they must have been nearly empty before the argument began.

"At any rate they went on to a road house in accordance with the original suggestion. There Mr. A and your brother had two or more high balls each; but Miss B felt somewhat ill and would not take anything except ice cream. As a result of this her condition improved, and she joined your brother in persuading or compelling Mr. A to leave the place.

"When they came to the car there happened to be a glare on the side of it from the lamps of another that was turning in the road. Miss B seemed confused and then alarmed. She clutched your brother's arm and said: 'Well, can you bear it! This boat is black and Johnny's is a dark blue. We've stolen some one else's car.'

"Mr. A thought it didn't matter. Whoever owned the car, he was in the poker party. They could get back before he quit.

"They started. Naturally the pace was fast; and on a dark turn they skidded, and struck some sort of small, low vehicle that was standing without a light. They didn't see it; never saw it; don't know what it was. The collision ground it into fragments that flew in a hundred different directions. Luckily, none came through the windshield, and

the heavy car plowed on without turning over, though the front of it was badly smashed. It took fire before the occupants were fairly out of it, and was totally destroyed.

"They didn't wait to see the end. They fled, and as no one was near when the wreck occurred they were unseen; and eventually they got safely home.

"I will add that the owner of the car is a business man of mature years who had left it in front of his own door. There was no poker party in that house. Miss B had mistaken it for a similar one on the block above. The theft of the car was reported to the police, but they have no clew."

He paused, and Sandy asked:

"Why not? Wasn't the car seen at the road house?"

"No. Your brother was prudent enough to park it in a dark spot some distance away. I have looked into the matter and am able to assure you that the theft of that car is a crime which wouldn't have been solved till doomsday."

"How did you solve it? Did this man A come here to ask you what he could do for my brother without going to jail, and taking Miss B there with him?"

Eldridge hesitated, and then answered: "Yes."

"You saw the car owner, and he agreed to settle on the quiet—for how much?"

"Five thousand dollars and a new car."

"We'll leave Miss B out of it. How much will Mr. A put up?"

"He can't raise a dollar. He's in pecuniary trouble already. The young persons are without means of their own, and they don't dare appeal to their parents."

"How will they dare to testify for my brother in a murder case? On the facts as you've stated them——"

"Nonsense, McKenna. The facts as I've stated them to you will never come

out. Our witnesses won't testify to car stealing. They'll say they met the defendant and took him to a road house. It'll be easy enough to fix them up with another car. I've told you that the real one wasn't seen out there. As for its owner, he can't interfere with us, because he isn't going to know who are the other parties to this settlement or what its real object is. He'll negotiate with me alone. And I'll add that he's a man who wants nothing but his money.

"McKenna, here is absolute salvation for your brother. These are exceptionally good witnesses. Mr. A is a fine-looking, athletic fellow, and Miss B is pretty, well bred and of spotless reputation. Her conduct the other evening may have been a trifle frolicsome by the standards that prevailed before the war, but such pranks are not at all unusual to-day. And, besides, it'll never be known."

Sandy walked the floor for half a minute, then halted at the end of the desk and rapped on it softly with his knuckles as he looked down at the lawyer in the chair.

"Mr. Eldridge, your story is a lie which an idiot would be ashamed to swallow," he said, "but I believe every damned word of it. The girl explains Steve's silence. The car stealing explains his guilty look, especially in my presence. He remembers what I said to him when I caught him in Dave Lang's crooked garage in Youngstown."

"Lang's converted, so your brother tells me. Full of piety and good advice. 'I wish I'd had the sense to profit by his warning,' Steve said. Lang seems to me a little softened in the pate, but he talks with sincerity. He'll go great with a jury."

And with this the lawyer's manner changed. He became the serious and experienced counselor, dropping the levity that had betrayed his relish of the depraved and conscienceless humor of the car-stealing adventure. That crime

would have to be settled, even independently of the graver offense. In opening negotiations with the owner, he himself had taken some risk. The man would have to be satisfied or he would go to the police again and keep the case alive.

This was all true if any of it was. Sandy took another little turn of walking with the devil at his back. How could he get such a sum of money? Not honestly; that was sure.

"You're asking me for five thousand dollars," he said. "How soon must you have it?"

"This minute wouldn't be too soon," the lawyer answered. "We can't leave these witnesses hanging in the air. And the owner's offer of settlement is good for only forty-eight hours."

"Very well," Sandy said. "I'll see what I can do. Good evening."

Once more he took his way toward Joe Brill's house, and now he had a double errand. Sandy's own way of getting money wouldn't serve in this emergency. It was too slow; it required too much preparation. There wasn't a criminal scheme in his head; there hadn't been, for months. But Joe Brill would know of something in his own line; something that could perhaps be done to-night.

And this was the same Sandy McKenna who sincerely looked forward to an honest life, no longer ago than yesterday. He had fallen back into a quicksand of crime, and he would never get out. He would surely sink in it and die. The irresponsible recklessness, the temptation of excitement that had buoyed him up in former days was now all gone. And it was sheer agony to think of trading on Joe Brill's doglike affection and self-deprecating admiration to lure him into a crime hastily undertaken, dangerous and perhaps deadly.

There was no light at Brill's windows. Sandy's private ring of the bell drew a blank. He looked in at the res-

taurant where Joe most often had his dinner when alone, but Bill hadn't been seen that day. Hoping to find a message from him, Sandy went home; and in the unlighted living room a figure somewhat darker than the surrounding darkness was sitting on the edge of a couch.

"Hello, Joe. Did you come down the fire escape?"

"No; I unlocked the door. You don't care, do you?"

"I'll say I don't. I'm too glad to see you." Sandy snapped on the light. "I was a nut last night. Will you forget it, Joe?"

"Not in a million years. But it's all right, Sandy. You couldn't do nothing to me that I don't deserve."

"If you owe me anything I'm going to give you a chance to square it."

"I wish there was a way, but there isn't. What's done is done and on the record of the man that done it. But if the man's gone, what's the record to him? Suppose you'd let the engine run last night. How could we lose, being dead? I don't believe in any hereafter. I wouldn't dare to."

"Have you gone soft, Joe?"

There was an emphatic bit of silence; then Joe said: "Why?"

"I've got to raise money, quick—quicker than it can be done in my own game. I'm asking you to help me out, but if I'd let that engine run last night I wouldn't be doing such a piece of dirt. It would be better for me, personally. But how about Steve?"

"Eldridge has hit you for money," Joe said. "What does he say he's going to do with it?"

Sandy told him the story as briefly as possible. Joe sat with his head in his hands, and at the end he spoke without looking up.

"Steve wasn't with them two," he said. "You didn't believe it, did you?"

"Yes. If I could see Steve I could make him tell me. He'll tell Eldridge

to-morrow, if he gets the right word from the girl."

"Well, I guess there is a girl," Brill said, after a struggle with his thoughts. "I guess there was a car stolen; but your brother wasn't there. I wish he had been."

Sandy was silent, trying to catch Brill's eye. At length he said:

"Joe, answer me straight. Do you think Steve is guilty?"

"Of that murder? I'm far from thinking so. There's no blood on his hands. I'd swear to that."

"Do you think Eldridge has those witnesses—even if his story isn't true?"

"No doubt of it. And we've got to have them. But they may not cost five thousand dollars. Knowing Eldridge, I'll gamble that the new car can be bought for half what he says."

Sandy breathed hard for a few seconds before he could force himself to ask:

"Do you know where we could do anything—to-night—to get what we need?"

"I'm hoping you don't have to do anything in that way, Sandy—never again. You've quit, and I want you to stick. It don't matter about me, but no man could be more sick of it. It leads from bad to worse, clear to the limit. We both know that. Certainly I do."

"That might sound good to me, Joe, but I can't throw my brother. And I've got less than twelve hundred in the bank."

"Well, it'll do. My pile goes with it, Sandy. It ain't clean money; you know that, but——"

"But I'd be a sweet bird to criticize it on that ground."

"I was going to say, it might do good just the same. I brought it over knowing Eldridge would strike you. I've been waiting for you here since four o'clock."

Sandy knew that Joe kept money hidden in his room, for use in sudden

need to leave town, but it was a surprise to see a roll the size of Joe's two fists come out of his pocket. He took off the rubber band and laid the money flat on the couch beside him. Sandy looked down at it and saw that the top-most bill was a grand.

"There's only two of the thousands," Brill said. "The rest is smaller stuff. It runs above four grand, and I bet you can fix Eldridge with less, for the present. Feed it out to him as slow as you can. Money to that vulture is like wind drawn in through the propeller of an airplane."

"But this breaks you, Joe. What'll you do?"

"What I want to do is to clear Steve. I feel it's up to me to do whatever's possible——" He stopped, and made a sign of warning. Both listened; then Brill rose and went softly to a window. Sandy had drawn down the shade after turning on the lights. It now sprang up with a snap. The fire escape balcony outside seemed crowded with men.

Two that were in uniform jumped through the open window with pistols in their hands. A detective followed them and then ran across to let in a couple of officers from the outer hall. Meanwhile, Inspector Berry had stepped in from the fire escape, accompanied by Al Delavan.

"Welcome to our party," Sandy said. "But what's it all about?"

"I was looking for that friend of your brother's whom he wouldn't name," the inspector answered, "and I've caught him with the goods. Stand up, Brill." Joe had dropped back on the couch. "I'll have a look at those big bills you're sitting on."

CHAPTER IX.

IN THE DARK ROOM AGAIN.

IT was Delavan who took the money, thus explaining his presence. He was there as an expert in stains, but his report was negative. Neither of the

thousand-dollar bills bore a stain or had been cleansed of one. A search of Brill discovered only a few dollars he had reserved to carry him along.

He had heard himself charged, for the second time, with the murder of Wiegand, and had denied it. That was all, thus far. He had shown no desire to make an argument in his own defense; and the inspector had been occupied in communicating by telephone with officers who were hunting for the Crown Theater loot in Brill's rooms. Nothing had been found as yet, but the search was incomplete. They were instructed that the inspector would wait a little while for a call-back from them.

Turning from the telephone he caught sight of Sandy whom he had condemned to silence by an order issued at the outset of the proceedings. But it was never Berry's way to gag men who were connected with a crime in which he had an interest. So long as they would speak to the point they might talk themselves inside out if they were foolish enough to do so.

"You're bursting with a lie, McKenna," he said. "What is it?"

"It's a desire to put you right as to this unnamed friend of my brother's. Joe isn't the man. I know who he is and all about Steve's actions on the night of the crime, but by advice of counsel I have had to keep still."

"Keep on doing it," Brill interposed. "Don't spill that story now—not on my account. Give the other parties a chance; I'll stand the gaff."

"I heard a few words while outside that window," the inspector said, "enough to let me know that Eldridge is selling you a fake alibi for several thousand dollars. You'll waste your money if you buy. There's only one genuine alibi in this affair. That's Lang's, and it's conclusive. I've learned that the night watchman of the hotel was listening at Lang's door at the time when the woman knocked on the wall."

Sandy shot back: "What does this do to your star witness, Eichbaum, who identified Lang?"

"He didn't, but I led you to think so. Eichbaum has never identified Lang or you. His testimony has been unvarying, with only a natural hesitation due to the unusual resemblances. He says that Brill and your brother are the men. They undoubtedly are; and it would be no kindness to encourage you in false hopes.

"The case is simple and clear. Your brother saw Brill recognize him in the theater. Naturally he wanted to know whether you were told that he was with Lang, and how much trouble this was going to make for himself. The first thing to do was to see Brill, so he laid for him at his house.

"Steve has been running very wild. His debts were crowding him. He got a little help from Lang, but it didn't begin to cover his needs. He told Brill how he was situated, and Brill told him how to get money when you have to have it. Everybody was onto Wiegand's habit of carrying that pocket-book." The inspector wheeled suddenly toward Joe. "*You* knew all about it.

Brill drew a long breath, and then said slowly:

"Yes. I don't deny it."

"Well? Tell us the rest of it. I can see a confession in your face."

"No," Brill said; "you're wrong. I was only thinking of something. Let me ask you: Do you believe there was another pair of men in that theater that looked like me and Sandy?"

"Three pairs? I'll say not."

"And you say Lang's out of it. Sandy, too. That puts it up to Steve and me, by Eichbaum's description and identification. And if I know that I didn't do it, what else do I know?"

"I don't get you, Brill."

"Why, I know that Eichbaum's lying. And if he is lying, he did the thing himself."

Sandy uttered a sound like the crow of a hoarse rooster. He shouldered a detective out of the way, flung one long arm around Joe's heavy bulk and lifted him as if he had been a slender girl. But when he was dropped he shook the house.

"You've said it, Joe!" he cried. "That's the answer!"

The inspector seemed entirely unmoved by what had been said or by Sandy's wild performance. But a keen observer might have seen that he was studying Brill with the most careful attention, and was willing to continue that study without disturbing the conditions.

"Eichbaum was shot, you know," he mildly suggested.

"He shot a piece out of his coat," Sandy said, "and aimed a little too close. That's that."

The inspector made a slight gesture indicating that Sandy was not the witness. Then he addressed Joe.

"No gun was found. Where is it? And what became of the money?"

"I didn't say Eichbaum did it without help," Joe answered. "He passed those things out, and I think I know who got 'em."

"Who?"

"The man that was closing up the theater. He says he never heard those shots; didn't know there'd been a hold-up till Eichbaum came out of his scare and yelled for help. I don't believe it. He was the first one on the scene, and gave the alarm. But he didn't do it till he was good and ready, and gun and money were well hid."

"We questioned that man to-day till he was so tired he fell out of his chair," the inspector said. "He hadn't slept much the previous night, I suppose. But while he could talk he answered as straight as a string. We're satisfied he's all right. And we've checked up Eichbaum's story very carefully. What more can we do?"

This is one of Berry's favorite trick questions. A guilty person can't honestly advise the police. An innocent person can. The advice may be foolish but it will be sincerely directed toward the discovery of the truth, for that is what will save him. But a guilty person can be seen to cast a veiled mental glance toward where his secret is hidden, before he points his finger in the opposite direction. In a scene of noisy scolding it won't work, of course, but Berry knows how to chloroform the prisoner's caution by a friendly listening attitude and by seeming to be impressed by what the victim has already said.

He seemed to have caught Brill without anything to say, which is rather a bad sign, indicating that the prisoner has no serious suspicion of the person on whom he is trying to shift the guilt.

"If you can't find the gun nor the money——" That was as far as he could go.

"By the way," the inspector said, interrupting him, "can you give any account of *this* money? Where did you get it?"

Joe merely stared at the inspector's feet. He hadn't got that money in a way that could be mentioned.

"If you haven't got nothing on Eichbaum and the other man," he said at length, "you've got to get something out of them, themselves. I don't know how, unless you work 'em the way you worked Sandy and me, whatever *that* was."

"What do you mean?"

"In the dark room. What you done to us, I don't know. You couldn't have heard us; Delavan convinced me of that. But you got the information somehow, and as it couldn't have been heard, you must have had a way to see it."

Sandy turned an anxious glance on Delavan, but the detective was too shrewd to be suspicious. If Sandy had

betrayed the secret, Brill wouldn't be giving the fact away in this manner.

"That's nonsense," the inspector said; and just then the telephone rang.

It was a report from the officers at Brill's rooms. Nothing of importance had been found.

The inspector beckoned to Delavan and led him to the window, where they conferred in whispers for quite a long time. The other officers had kept Sandy and Brill apart. Finally the inspector went to Brill, took him by the arm and conducted him down to the street, Delavan following with Sandy, and the others trailing along as a rear guard, but keeping quite close.

One of the large police cars stood in front of the house. Sandy, Joe, Delavan and the inspector got in and they started for the station. The chief addressed Joe:

"Why did Eichbaum describe you and McKenna?"

"I bet he knew me. I bet he could have named me."

"What makes you think so?"

"The way he sized me up while I was at the window. He had time; there wasn't much doing. And he knew who I was with."

"Where was McKenna standing? Beside you?"

"No. He'd gone across to look at pictures on the wall."

The distance would be favorable to a mistake as to Sandy's age. But the ticket man must have seen Lang and Steve. What of it? If he was looking forward to the murder, it would be to his advantage to have a description of two crooks who were actually in the house, but it would not be best to make a definite accusation which might be immediately refuted by convincing alibis.

The inspector was turning these matters over in his mind as the car went past the Crown Theater, closed out of respect to the murdered Wiegand. At

the next corner they were halted by the stream of traffic on the avenue. A man crossed the street in front of them. It was Eichbaum. The trifling infection of his wound had been remedied; he had recovered from the hangover which was his chief trouble, and he had been sent home.

"Go get him, Al," the inspector said.

Delavan got out, but Berry didn't wait for him. Instead he gave a new address to the chauffeur, and the car went on. It stopped in front of a tenement house of the better grade, and there a passenger was taken aboard—a fat and drowsy young man named Julius Klein, the person who had closed the big doors of the Crown Theater on the night of the murder, and had given the alarm.

The trick room at headquarters looked the same as when Sandy had first seen it, except that it now contained several more chairs. Eichbaum, pale and miserable, was very glad to flop down in a chair; and so, too, was Klein, who seemed stupid with drowsiness.

"What was the use of dragging me down here to identify those men again?" Eichbaum was grumbling. "I've done it already."

"I'll say it was no use to bring me," Klein growled. "What can I do? I didn't see anybody."

"I've got a use for you," the inspector said. "I'm sending for young McKenna. It might take ten or fifteen minutes to get him."

Eichbaum's eyes were roving uneasily, surveying this scene which naturally disturbed his mind with questions. Why was Brill, under arrest for murder, treated in this peculiar way? He wasn't handcuffed nor under guard. There were policemen in the anteroom, but in this one there wasn't an officer except Berry. Delavan had gone out the other way.

The bare room suggested a small rehearsal hall. They might be going to reenact the murder. That must be the idea, and it was nothing to worry about. He could go through with it.

The inspector, standing in front of the four seated men, glanced for a moment at the electric bulb hanging close to his head.

"We'll need more light here." He started toward the door through Delavan had gone. "Al! Get us a better light, can you?"

Then the darkness came, and the inspector played the game as he had done before—ordering the men not to move, talking as he went out into the farther room.

Sandy, who was seated close beside Eichbaum, laid a hand on his arm and whispered:

"You damned dog, if you don't get my brother out of this I'll put the job on you. I'll sting you for that murder."

Eichbaum shook off Sandy's hand.

"What are you talking about? Let me alone."

"I'm telling you you're here in a trap," Sandy whispered. "And I'm going to spring it on you. You did that thing, and I know how you got away with it."

He waited for a response, but none came. He prayed to Heaven that Eichbaum was talking to himself. It seemed to Sandy as if he could hear Eichbaum doing it.

Sandy touched his arm again. It was bent. He ran his hand along the sleeve toward the wrist. Eichbaum was covering his face with his hands. Sandy jerked at the arm; but Eichbaum held it in place. He didn't speak; he silently resisted.

It seemed impossible that he could know the trick. He must have had the blind luck to do the one thing that could beat it. Perspiration suddenly leaped from every pore of Sandy's body, for

the stake was high in this game and he was losing it.

What should he do? Trick questions had been decided on in advance, but they couldn't accomplish anything under these conditions; and he couldn't get any result by fighting the man and ripping his hands away from his face. For a mere moment that seemed endless Sandy battled with his own wits, which were in a turmoil, in vain; and then it was too late.

Light flashed up in the room. He saw Delavan and the inspector coming like two fire engines. They were headed for Eichbaum and they ran over him. His feet were high in the air as the chair crashed backward to the floor. Both Delavan and Berry were clutching at his throat.

It came to Sandy that the dark light had shown Eichbaum taking poison. They were forcing his mouth open, pulling something out of it. A fragment of yellow paper fell to the floor beside the struggling men. Sandy snatched it up, and found that he was holding in his hand his brother's life and freedom.

Eichbaum had been caught with the stained bill in his possession, and it meant death. Hidden in what he thought to be impenetrable darkness he had tried to preserve his life by eating a hasty meal of the value of a thousand dollars. Delavan's words came to Sandy's memory:

"We'll never find a guilty man who doesn't do *something* that will give him away."

As for plump Julius Klein, his status in the affair had been revealed no less clearly than Eichbaum's. As soon as darkness closed around him he had cuddled his tired body in the chair, whispering to himself: "Here's where I hit the hay."

In fact, Eichbaum had no accomplice in the crime. He had prepared a very clever hiding place in the wall of the

box office. Only a moment had been needed to put the money and the pistol there, after he had shot his employer and inflicted the fake wound on his own body—aiming a little too close, as Sandy had suggested.

A newspaper had got hold of the facts about the marked bill, and had printed them in a late extra. Eichbaum had read the story and had got the fatal piece of evidence, meaning to destroy it. But he had persuaded himself that the stain could be removed so that the

bill could eventually be passed without danger, and he was very fond of money.

It remains only to say that Sandy found his honest job waiting for him at the electrician's. Steve remained at college, though Columbia never can teach him anything so valuable as the lesson he had learned in the grim school on Centre Street. As for honest Joe Brill, it would be rash to speak of him as a reformed man, but he hasn't been in any more trouble to date, and is going to work every day.

"A Lone Hand," by Francis Lynde, the novel in THE POPULAR next week, is a thrilling action story if there ever was one. A man sets out to prove—to his sweetheart and to himself—that he is not a coward. Next week.



A RUMOR IN WALL STREET

AS a rule Wall Street is as sensitive to a rumor from Washington as the hunted rabbit is to the crack of a gun on the neighboring hillside. Invariably, when the rumor has to do with new legislation or a change in the governing body of a great corporation, the brokers are as eagerly on the lookout for a cyclone cellar as the terrified rabbit for a thick and concealing bramble patch.

But one rumor struck the Street and, though it rushed from lip to lip, produced neither flinching of hearts nor falling of prices. It was the story that President Coolidge, upon leaving the White House, would become chairman of the board of directors of the United States Steel Corporation.

A change in the ruling personnel of a corporation whose business reached to the ends of the earth! A new man, a greenhorn, slated for the top perch in a company that put its impress on the world of gold! A politician, a lifelong office holder, an individual who had neither experience nor wide acquaintance, in the business of controlling the destinies of stocks and bonds! All that, and much more, the rumor set forth as it volleyed and thundered up and down the canyon of cash, and still the miracle persisted: Wall Street did not turn a hair nor let its aerolatic heart skip a single beat. It was untouched of panic. Calm sat icily upon its unfurrowed brow.

"I wonder why that was," speculated a retired army officer, lounging in a well-known Washington club.

"That's easy," volunteered a Middle Western lawyer, who at that very time was hoping for a political appointment from the president. His voice had just enough drawl in it to express a playful sarcasm. "Those Wall Street men knew Mr. Coolidge and Mr. Coolidge's reputation. They knew he could be absolutely relied upon not to run the United States Steel Corporation into debt."

Noch-Tee's Daughter



By
Henry
Herbert
Knibbs

Author of "Partners," "Thimblereg," Etc.

An Indian girl who protected the white man she loved at terrible expense to herself.

A FEW years before Dick Yardlaw became notorious as a gun fighter—and many years before the Lester County sheriff, Ed Applegate, ran Dick over into Mexico and brought him back—Yardlaw was buying sheep from the Navajos and Mormons south of the railroad, down Concho and St. John's way. Yardlaw spoke Navajo like a native, having been raised on the reservation. His father, Jim Yardlaw, was a trader. The Navajos liked him.

When old Jim Yardlaw died, Dick was about twenty-two years of age—a tall, straight-backed, smooth-faced young fellow with a gaze so disconcertingly direct and a manner so deliberate that he never became popular in the community. With the money

left him he bought a ranch north of the reservation, along the San Juan. In a few years he owned something like twelve thousand head of sheep, and had six or eight herders working for him. The wool market was good; and he prospered.

A quarter of a century later, when Dick was as grizzled as an old wolf and about as sociable, he confessed to his one friend, Ed Applegate, that he went into the sheep business hoping to get enough money to pay for an education, following which he intended to travel, and see the world.

"I got an education—but not out of books," he said in conclusion. "And I wore out some mighty good horses, travelin'." That was as near as Dick Yardlaw ever came to confessing to an

ideal, or telling anything about himself.

When Noch-tee, the Navajo—a seamy-faced old gentleman who didn't approve of modern methods and manners—was smitten with the smallpox, he said nothing about it, further than to send, secretly, for a Black Hills medicine man. The medicine man exorcised the evil spirit; but not before Noch-tee and his wife died of the disease.

Their daughter, a rather good-looking girl of fifteen, was left utterly alone. Noch-tee's sheep became hers. And immediately she had Navajo suitors—good-for-nothing young bucks who sported Stetsons and cowboy boots, rode modern stock saddles, and spent most of their time loafing about the trading post.

But she didn't want any of them. She had set her cap for a real husband, a white man who would give her a good home, and dresses, like the white trader at To-see-to gave his Navajo wife. Ever since Noch-tee's daughter had been twelve years old she had been in love with the trader's son, Dick Yardlaw. What young buck could outride him, or was half as handsome, or quick, or brave? Noch-tee's daughter considered Dick Yardlaw the perfect example of what a white chief should be. He had a chief's eye, was stern, didn't giggle—as so many of her suitors did—and absolutely ignored her, except for passing a friendly word when they met.

Noch-tee's daughter owned two hundred head of sheep, some clothing, silver ornaments, turquoise, and some cooking utensils. But she had no hogan in which to live, as the hogan in which her parents had died had been abandoned. And she had no food. So she went to the nearest trading post to pawn her silver bracelets.

It happened that Dick Yardlaw was at the post, having stopped, on his way north, to visit with the trader. Dick

had just heard that the girl's mother and father were dead. So when she came in, and offered the bracelets for pawn, Dick slid down off the high counter, shook hands with her, and asked her bluntly, what she had inherited from her parents, what she intended to do, and how much money she needed. Hesitantly, she told him. And she told him that Charley Tclee would build her another hogan for a hundred sheep.

"The hell he will!" said Yardlaw, in English. "Staying at Charley Tclee's place? Well, just hop on your pony and ride over there. I'll be along, later; and we'll see about the sheep, and the new hogan."

Noch-tee's daughter did as she was told, and gladly. But not because of Yardlaw's intimation that he would help her. Rather, because he had commanded her to go. She liked that. And he had the chief's eye. When he said "No," he meant it.

However, Noch-tee's daughter rode slowly. Finally, she reined up her only-too-willing pony and allowed him to graze. When she heard the sound of Dick's horse coming, she kicked her pony in the ribs. Yardlaw overtook her and rode along with her to Charley Tclee's.

The white man talked with Charley, told him to go ahead and build a hogan for Noch-tee's daughter, and promised to give him twenty dollars when the hogan was built. Charley Tclee had sheep and had dealt with Yardlaw. Finally he decided that twenty dollars in the hand was worth a hundred sheep in the brush. Yardlaw further told him to hitch up his wagon and drive to the trader's to get some supplies for Noch-tee's daughter. And in the presence of the family he told Charley and the girl just what the supplies were.

Then he rode with Noch-tee's daughter to the corral where she kept her sheep, and had her herd them in. He looked them over, and bought them. He

gave her his check in payment and told her the trader had agreed to cash the check in installments, as she needed supplies.

Yardlaw had stepped off his horse and was standing by the corral opening. Noch-tee's daughter was overcome. That the young white man had been so kind, and yet so stern! If he would only smile. Shyly, she glanced up at him, touched his arm with her slender brown fingers.

"Now, don't do that!" said Yardlaw, as she put her hands before her face and wept. "Don't do that, kid!" And he flung his arm about her shoulders and kissed her on the cheek.

Then he mounted his horse and sat looking down at her. "I'm going to leave those sheep here," he said, "on shares. You look after 'em, and in a couple of years you'll have your two hundred back and make a living at the same time. But don't let any of the young men talk you into marrying. You're just a kid yet. Wait a few years. If anybody bothers you, you ride over to the post and tell Blakely. Your father was a good man, and my father's friend. And I'm your friend."

Yardlaw rode away. Noch-tee's daughter stood watching him, her hand on her breast. He had told her many things. He had told her not to marry, to wait a few years—that she was just a child. Perhaps he thought so, but she felt she wasn't a child, so far as the young white man was concerned. She wanted to cook his meals for him, wash his clothes, keep his house neat, live with him, and be known as Dick Yardlaw's woman.

What with buying and selling, grazing his herds up Cumbres Pass way, following the grass as the snow left it, shearing and shipping, superintending the purchase and distribution of supplies to his many camps, Yardlaw was kept just a little more than busy. So busy, in fact, that for a while he actu-

ally forgot about Noch-tee's daughter and the two hundred head of sheep. When he thought of them, he dismissed the thought as inconsequential. Noch-tee's daughter must be doing well, or he would have heard to the contrary. Blakely, the trader, had said he would let him know if anything unusual happened.

Something like two years later, Yardlaw was going over his books, preparatory to making a big shipment of wool. He had made a contract with a Middle Western firm, and he knew that he might even have to purchase wool outside to fill it. He recalled the little herd he had left with Noch-tee's daughter. He did some figuring which resulted in his sending one of his most trustworthy Mexican herders down on the reservation to report on the condition and increase of the two hundred head. The Mexican returned, after a two-day ride.

"Señor, there are no sheep," he declared.

"What the devil! Sure you went to the right place?"

"Sí. To the Navajo girl who lives alone in the hogan to the west of Charley Tclee's place. Many times have I been in that country."

"No sheep, eh? What's the reason?"

The Mexican shrugged. "All the girl would say was, 'There are no sheep.' I asked in her language, but it did no good."

"Did Charley Tclee say anything?"

"No, señor. He is also an Indian."

"All right, Joe. I'll ride over there myself."

Yardlaw didn't ride direct to the hogan of Noch-tee's daughter. He rode to the trading post, and asked Blakely for an accounting. Blakely resented Yardlaw's brusqueness, while understanding the reason for it.

"Just cool down, now, Dick," he said. "I didn't know there was anything queer going on till I heard Charley

Teclee's wife make a remark to her old man about Noch-tee's sheep. I didn't ask any questions—knew better than to do that. But I kept both ears open.

"About a week ago I heard that Chee-nez, that big, no-account buck you seen around here plenty, had bought a race pony and a couple of saddles, and about all the silver stuff he could pack, down to Gallup. Likewise I heard he'd been on one grand drunk. He'd been hangin' around Noch-tee's girl, considerable, and the Navajos were commencin' to say things wa'n't just straight, in that direction.

"But I didn't believe that. The girl ain't a bad girl. Anyhow, I didn't connect up Chee-nez's blow-out with your sheep, till yesterday, when I up and asked her, point-blank. She wouldn't say anything, except that she was afraid of Chee-nez. I told her if your sheep were missing, she'd better be afraid of you. She got some stuff here, and rode off. She looked kind of worried, and thin. I don't know what she's been up to, but if I was you I'd sure pack a gun when I rode over to her hogan."

"I don't want any trouble with the Indians, but I'm making that ride, right now."

And Yardlaw stalked out of the trading post.

"Goin' on the high lope," said Blakely, as he heard the thunder of hoofbeats on the wooden bridge north of the post.

The giant pinnacles of Shiprock loomed gray and cold against a gray sky. A dull ring of amber marked the position of the clouded sun. Yardlaw swung from the road, and headed west, toward Charley Teclee's hogan. Arriving at the hogan, he found that it had been abandoned. Yet the trader had just mentioned Charley Teclee's wife. The family were living somewhere in the district.

Yardlaw pushed on toward Noch-

tee's hogan, which he knew also had been abandoned. Passing Noch-tee's hogan he noticed fresh moccasin tracks crossing a sandy wash near the place. Ordinarily, Navajos would not go near a hogan in which some one had died. The moccasin tracks meant nothing to Yardlaw, yet he had noticed them—and noticed the direction in which they led. He did not know just where the hogan of Noch-tee's daughter had been built, but he surmised that it was not over a mile or so west of the others. He followed a faint wagon track, and fresh pony tracks across the bleak mesa.

Presently he saw the rounded top of a hogan, about a half mile ahead. He pulled his horse down to a walk and surveyed the country. There were no sheep grazing out across the flat between there and the hills. Approaching the hogan, he saw two ponies in the corral. They were saddled. He recognized the gray pony as belonging to Noch-tee's daughter. The other, a roan, was bigger, and looked as though he might be fast. On the roan was a new saddle, and a bridle heavy with silver.

"Looks like Noch-tee's girl had company," Yardlaw told himself.

Blakely, the trader, had mentioned Chee-nez, had said that he had been hanging around Noch-tee's daughter, and that she had said she was afraid of him. Yardlaw knew the Indian, knew him for a bad one. So he rode up, hailed the hogan, and sat his horse.

Noch-tee's daughter came to the doorway. She had grown taller. Her big, dark eyes had lost their girlish sparkle. She was still pretty, but she had changed so much that Yardlaw was curious. He spoke her name and nodded. She asked him to come in.

"Any one in there?" asked Yardlaw sharply.

"No one."

Yardlaw stepped down off his horse.

"What's all this I hear about the sheep?" he asked.

Noch-tee's daughter hesitated, then said: "Come in and I will show you." And she stepped back into the hogan.

If Yardlaw had had reason to suspect her of treachery, he would have hesitated about stepping into the hogan. But he had befriended her, knew that she liked him, and thought that possibly she was in some kind of trouble or other which she wished to disclose. He strode into the hogan, glanced round the dim interior.

Noch-tee's daughter was kneeling at the far side of the hogan taking something from a box. She rose and faced him. In her hands was a jumble of silver bracelets, silver bead chains, turquoise, and a string of ancient coral beads.

"It is all I have," she said. "The sheep, they are gone."

"I don't want that stuff!" said Yardlaw. "What did you do with the sheep?"

Noch-tee's daughter stared at him, terror in her eyes—hopelessness. Yardlaw was puzzled. What was the matter with the girl? Why didn't she talk?

Suddenly the hogan, dim enough, seemed to grow darker. Yardlaw whipped his gun out as he whirled—fired shot after shot into the doorway. He did not know what he was shooting at, or what he had hit, until the smoke drew up.

Face down in the doorway, a long-barreled Colt still clutched in his hand, lay a Navajo buck. A thin, dark stain crept from his open mouth and crawled across the hard-packed floor. Yardlaw punched the empty shells out of his gun and reloaded it. He swung around.

"Turn him over!" he said to Noch-tee's daughter. "I want to see who your friend is."

"It is Chee-nez," she said, her face frozen, her lips stiff.

"I thought so," said Yardlaw. He

holstered his gun and strode out into the gray light. His horse had backed away to one side of the hogan, and stood there trembling. Yardlaw glanced back at the figure in the doorway, caught up the reins, and mounted.

It was his first killing. And even as he realized what a close call he had, he could not understand what had warned him, prompted him to such swift and conclusive action. Perhaps the instinct of the animal who feels danger even when it is invisible and soundless.

The actual killing of Chee-nez had not shaken him. But Yardlaw was too keen not to realize that the killing would mark him, cause him endless trouble, and probably disrupt all his plans for the future. One thing he knew definitely. He would have to get off the reservation immediately. Chee-nez had many relatives, and they could never be made to believe that he had not been murdered.

About midnight, Yardlaw rode into the reservation superintendent's doorway, routed out the superintendent and told his story.

"I don't know what Noch-tee's girl will say," concluded Yardlaw. "She'll lie, most likely. But I'll take a chance that the government will play square. And mebbe it would be a good idea to get hold of her before Chee-nez's people hear of this. They'll scare her into saying anything they want her to say."

The superintendent called up two of his Navajo police and sent them out to bring in the daughter of Noch-tee.

The superintendent believed Yardlaw. He knew him well, and had known his father. But the superintendent had his own position to consider. If Yardlaw disappeared, after having been at the agency, and did not show up when the case was called, the department in Washington would ask some direct and formal questions that would be difficult to answer. The superintendent consid-

ered it his duty to arrest Yardlaw and hold him until the case was tried. He told Yardlaw this, tactfully.

Yardlaw laughed.

"You mean, throw me in your calaboose, with Navajo police guarding me, and all Chee-nez's relatives waiting to get a crack at me? Not this journey! Hold your ear to the ground, and listen! I killed Chee-nez, who came in that hogan to shoot me in the back. Then I rode the legs off a good horse to get here and give you the straight of it. I had plenty of time to make my get-away.

"And as far as that goes, I got plenty of time yet. And I'm leaving. When the case comes up, I'll be there. I don't mind taking on all the bucks on the reservation, two at a time. But I don't just like the idea of getting shot in the back through the window of your calaboose, or getting shot off my horse by one of your police on the way to the trial. It would be right easy for him to plug me and claim I tried to escape."

"I'll guarantee you safe conduct——"

"Safe conduct? You can't guarantee that you'll be alive, yourself, to-morrow morning. I was raised among them Indians, and I aim to do my own guaranteeing—which is that they won't get me, and that if you send a couple of your police after me when I leave here, you'll have two more dead Indians to explain to the government."

"But, Yardlaw, that's decidedly irregular. I——"

"I'm feeling kind of irregular, right now. And you can't do anything, except promise. The government's got you hobbled. But me—I'm running loose for a spell."

The government did have the superintendent hobbled, and he knew it. But he didn't like to be told do.

"Aside from the circumstances of the killing, I consider your remarks damned impertinent!" he said.

"Call it that, if you like. I was just mentioning facts. I know you're game. But don't open that drawer in your desk where you keep your gun. I'd hate to kill a white man." And Yardlaw, standing near the door, reached back and took hold of the doorknob.

"I'll parole you till the trial," said the superintendent.

Yardlaw nodded, opened the door and backed out. He rode a tired horse the thirty-odd miles to his ranch on the San Juan, and awakened his head sheep herder, who got him something to eat. Then he slept for three or four hours.

The next day he left a blank, signed check with the Mexican, whom he could trust; and, on a fresh mount, rode east and eventually turned south into Largo Canyon. That night he ate supper in an isolated cabin in the Gallinas Hills, his host a squat, pocked-marked Mexican who traded in horses, chiefly at night.

For two months Yardlaw's whereabouts were unknown save to two persons, both Mexicans. Neither would have divulged Yardlaw's whereabouts for anything this side of torture or threat of death. So much for honor among sheepmen and horse traders.

Arrested and confined in the agency jail, Noch-tee's daughter refused to talk. She had been told, by one of the Navajo police, that Yardlaw had escaped, had run away. She was glad. Jail was a terrible place. The superintendent tried to induce her to answer his questions. He told her that Yardlaw was to be tried for the killing of Chee-nez, and that if she told the truth it might save him from the penitentiary. Noch-tee's daughter thought that the superintendent was lying; was trying to trap her. For had not one of her own people told her that Yardlaw had not been arrested, that he had run away? So she would not talk.

Then government officials arrived and questioned her, but still she refused to

answer. Finally she was told that she was to be tried for the murder of Chee-nez. They took her, in a wagon, many miles across the reservation. She was sitting in the courtroom, beside one of the Navajo police, when there was a stir near the doorway. The door swung open and Yardlaw stalked in. There was more than a flutter of excitement. They had captured him, arrested him. And now he would be sent to the penitentiary for killing Chee-nez.

"I will tell," said Noch-tee's daughter.

But she was told that she would have to wait until she was called. The trial proceeded. Blakely the trader, Charley Tclee, his wife, and family were called and questioned. It was all a terrifying mystery to the Navajo girl. But when, finally, she was placed on the witness stand she told this story:

Chee-nez had wanted to marry her. For two years he had bothered and threatened her. But she did not want to marry Chee-nez. She wanted to marry Dick Yardlaw, who had been kind to her. And Chee-nez knew that she wanted to marry the white man. He had told her he would kill her, if she did. He had told her that he would also kill the white man. She grew afraid of Chee-nez, and ashamed of what the Navajo people said. She knew that Chee-nez did not care for her. He wanted her sheep. So, desperate, alone, and not knowing what to do, she told him, one day, that if he would go away and never come back, he could take the sheep—take them all. Then he would not kill Yardlaw.

Chee-nez sold the sheep, spent the money, and got drunk. He came back. He lived in Noch-tee's abandoned hogan. Charley Tclee became afraid of him and went to live in another place. Then Yardlaw's herder came to find out about the sheep. She was afraid to tell him. Chee-nez was away when the herder came.

But a few days later Chee-nez came back, drunk and with bottles of whisky in a sack. Chee-nez was a devil. He was not afraid to live in a hogan where people had died. On the morning of the day when he was killed, he had ridden over from the abandoned hogan, put his horse in the corral, and asked Noch-tee's daughter to get him something to eat. She cooked a meal for him. After he had eaten, he drank whisky. Then he went out and laid down in the draw back of the hogan and went to sleep. And while Chee-nez was asleep, Dick Yardlaw came.

Noch-tee's daughter asked him to come in. When he asked if there was any one in the hogan she said there was no one. She was afraid to tell Dick Yardlaw what had become of the sheep, because she had done wrong. But she meant to tell him, to pay him for them. She saw that his heart was hard. That he was angry because the sheep were gone. She hoped that he would take the bracelets, and turquoise, and bead chains and silver chains, and go, before Chee-nez awakened.

But Chee-nez had awakened. And Yardlaw's horse was standing in front of the hogan. Even when Chee-nez appeared in the doorway, she was so afraid of the white man's anger that she could not speak. But the white man was greater than Chee-nez. He shot him, and got on his horse and went away.

On this evidence, and the evidence of Blakely the trader, as to the character of Chee-nez, Yardlaw was acquitted. But Yardlaw knew, though acquitted, that he was a marked man among the Navajos, and that his troubles had only begun. The community became aware of this a few minutes later after he left the courtroom.

He had come on a horse, the most flexible means of travel, and he had come prepared for any emergency. A Mexican was holding his horse, across

the street from the courtroom. Under the right stirrup leather was a short rifle. Yardlaw was unarmed when in the courtroom. There were Navajo teams and wagons up and down the street, and many saddle ponies. Most of the Navajos had sat in their wagons or had stood in groups about the street, waiting until the trial was over.

Among these was a brother of Chee-nez, a Navajo from the Black Hills. When he saw Yardlaw come from the courtroom and start to cross the street toward his horse, the brother of Chee-nez reached in the wagon box beside which he was standing. Noch-tee's daughter was being escorted from the court by one of the Navajo police. She saw the brother of Chee-nez reach in the wagon box; saw Yardlaw, halfway across the street; and she cried out a shrill warning.

Yardlaw knew her voice. He did not turn, but leaped toward his horse, jerked the short rifle from the scabbard and, whirling round, whipped it up to his shoulder as the brother of Chee-nez began firing at him with a Winchester. Yardlaw fired twice, swung up on his horse, and spurred down the street. The brother of Chee-nez let his rifle fall into the wagon box, and slithered down, grasping at the spokes of the front wheel as he died.

When those who had witnessed this second killing told the sheriff, he refused to go after Yardlaw. But Yardlaw knew nothing of that. He rode south, saving his horse all he could. In two days he was across the border and in Sonora. Before going to the trial, Yardlaw had left written instructions with Blakely to sell his ranch and his sheep, and to turn the money over to Pablo Dominguez.

About six months later, Pablo Dominguez, Yardlaw's head sheepherder, joined his patron in Mexico. They drifted farther south, where

Yardlaw bought some cattle, hired a few vaqueros and settled down to the life of a cattleman.

For two years things went well with him. Then Pablo Dominguez was killed in a Yaqui raid. Yardlaw escaped and crossed the border.

Twenty-five years changed Yardlaw a great deal. His face had become hard lined, his hair and mustache grizzled. And he had become heavier, and less active. Hardship and outlawry had left their mark. He was now deputy sheriff of Lester County. He happened to be in Holbrook, making inquiry about a fugitive he was hunting. There were a few Navajos in town, but Yardlaw paid no attention to them. He knew that Chee-nez and his brother had been forgotten by all the Navajos, except, perhaps, a few of the older men. And Holbrook was far from the Black Hills, where Chee-nez's family had lived. The Black Hills Indians seldom came to Holbrook.

Yardlaw stepped out of a saloon and was about to cross the street to the railroad station, when he noticed an old Navajo squaw squatting near the curb. As he stepped past her, she reached down and picked up a piece of rotten banana and began to eat it. He could not believe that there was any one among the Navajos so poor or so hungry. Had the woman been an Apache, he would have paid no attention to her. But a Navajo! Yardlaw glanced at her shriveled wrists, her bony hands, like claws, at her face half hidden by stringy gray hair.

"Here, mother!" he said in Navajo. "Don't eat that garbage." And he gave her a handful of silver, and passed on.

It was Noch-tee's daughter, the shameless one, the bad woman whom the gods had forgotten.

She had recognized her white man. But Yardlaw did not know her.

An interesting story by Henry Herbert Knibbs will appear in an early issue.



The Amateur Who Slammed John L.

By William Hemmingway

Author of "The Champion Looks Ahead," "The Champion Grows Reckless," Etc.

Mr. Hemmingway's articles are always welcome because of their clarity, authenticity and interest. As you know, he is an authority on prize fighting, and we would like to tell you his real name, but we can't. The present article is remarkable, for it tells of the only time John L. Sullivan ever was knocked down—outside of the fight with Corbett. It tells how a boxing amateur, a student, stood up to the Roxbury Strong Boy in a terrific fight—without doubt the most unique event in all ring history.

THE first battle that raised John L. Sullivan out of obscurity was fought amid the classic shades of fair Harvard. Genius though he was in the art of knocking giants cold, Sullivan did not spring full-fledged into the arena, but served a long apprenticeship in the outer twilight of mere local fame. The fight I tell of here brought him for the first time into view outside of his native ward, the Highlands of Roxbury. It was a whirlwind battle.

I am sure that it has never been published before. This has been due, on one side, to the astounding fact that a mere scholarly amateur held the mighty Sullivan at evens—a feat no pugilist could equal while he was at his best. Naturally, Sullivan never mentioned it. It was due, too, to the hearty dislike this particular amateur had for the sordid associations of boxing on the professional side, though he was devoted to the noble sport as the highest development of athletic prowess and a school of good nature and fair play. He never would talk about the match, always

brushed aside any reference to it, even by his intimate friends.

Sullivan is gone. His unique glory cannot now be dimmed by the linking of an amateur's name with his, a comparison hateful to the pride of a great fighting man. His antagonist, a charming, cultured gentleman of excellent family, died not long ago, full of honors earned in the practice of medicine; and if he were here to-day, he probably would smile in belated tolerance of this tribute to his youthful skill and courage. Yes; it can be told.

The amateur was Ramon Guiteras, a junior in Harvard College, who had spent his boyhood in the finest part of Brooklyn, known as the Heights, a lofty plateau overlooking New York Harbor, and the home of many eminent families. He began to learn the art of boxing by sparring with older boys, some of whom pounded him freely, as I have heard him tell, but each of whom taught him something useful in the art of hit, stop and get away. His sonorous Spanish name suggests an imposing, dark

grandee, full of dignity. Yet he was fair as any Nordic, ruddy, cheeked, blue eyed, with light-brown hair and an up-tilted, small blond mustache. He had always an air of reserve, which did not encourage familiarity, but with it a lively sense of humor and a ready smile. His chums always spoke to him and of him as "Git," an Americanization of the first syllable of his name. He was a fine American type.

When young Guiteras came to Harvard he found many fellows devoted to boxing; for the spell of Julian Hawthorne was on them. Only ten years before his coming, Jem Mace, the famous Gypsy, Champion of England, had spent several weeks at Harvard, giving lessons to students; and he was so impressed by the speed and stamina and courage of Hawthorne that he undertook to polish his style and help him become champion of the world, if he would leave college and embark on a ring career. But the grave and fastidious Nathaniel Hawthorne would not countenance such a thing, and son Julian never had his chance. This, at least, was the Harvard tradition, and scores of ambitious youths believed it and tried to train themselves to be his worthy successor. Ramon Guiteras had lively competition.

He had, too, an insatiable appetite for swapping punches; or, rather, for tapping the other fellow in a genial way while blocking or slipping his punches. The apartment he shared with a classmate had two bedrooms, bath and a sitting room some sixteen by eighteen feet. This was furnished with a broad rug, a study table and a few chairs, all of which were whisked out of the way any time a friend dropped in and asked for the pleasure of going a few rounds. Such enthusiasm and constant practice, plus strength, speed and an instinctive judgment of timing and distance, soon brought Git to the head of all the boxing interest. He stood six feet in

his socks, with long arms and legs, broad, sloping shoulders, a round, deep torso, well covered with smooth and swift-flowing muscles. He weighed one hundred and eighty, net. The most conspicuous thing about him was his un-failing, friendly smile.

A newly arrived second baseman on the Harvard nine heard of Git's ability, and believed he could beat him. He dropped in one afternoon and offered to box a while. Guiteras said he would be delighted; and in a jiffy the furniture was stowed away, and they went at it. The ball player stood six feet one and weighed two hundred and ten—a fine, upstanding man. Quick, too. As soon as they had shaken hands, he leaped at Guiteras and hit him in the chest with a right jolt that threw him back against the wall. This would have been legitimate enough in the prize ring, but was a thing not done among amateurs.

"I'll never forget how surprised Git looked as he bounced off the wall," said his roommate, who told me of the bout. "He was smiling but puzzled to think that any one would slam him like that. He side-stepped the next rush, then bluffed the big man off with a series of left leads and feints. Still smiling, he worked him all the way down to the end of the room, where a long wicker couch stood, close to the wall. There he stood a moment, feinted the second baseman into a lead, crossed him with the right—dropped him and laid him out cold on that couch, as easily as a clerk would lay a package on a shelf. Never saw anything so funny!"

The prestige of Guiteras was so great that the biggest and best of his companions always stipulated that he should "go light" with them when they sparred. This he did willingly; for a more modest or sweeter tempered man than Git never drew on a glove. He was easily the best boxer in college. He outplayed his friends, seemingly without effort,

never hurting them unnecessarily, but always maintaining a broad margin of superiority. He went into Boston two or three times a week and took lessons of Patsey Sheppard, a retired lightweight champion, who taught his art to a few choice pupils and kept a resort known as "The Champion's Rest," in Washington Street.

Mazeppa's patient search and vigil long of him who treasures up a wrong was never more patient and vigilant than the search which all lovers of the game are always making for a new fistic marvel, the excellent but unheralded fighting man they speak of as a "comer." Harvard amateurs were beginning to whisper, early in 1877, about a stout young fellow whose name they did not know, but who was referred to as the "Roxbury Strong Boy." It was told of him that he had split oak panels with his fist; that he could toss a keg of nails over his head and juggle with it; that he had lifted a derailed horse car back on the track when half a dozen ordinary men could do nothing with it; also, that he had gone on the stage of the Dudley Street Opera House in Boston Highlands on the invitation of Jack Scannell, a big pugilist of some fame, and, within half a minute had swung his right fist on him, knocked him high over the footlights and dropped him unconscious into a bass drum.

"Will you spar four rounds with the Roxbury Strong Boy?" the admiring friends of Guiteras inquired—with who can guess what speculations of seeing him meet his match? He had heard of the comer, too, and doubtless felt that Fate would probably bring him around some day.

"Why, yes," he replied; "I don't mind. Suppose we say after Easter vacation." Whereupon the admiring friends went away to make their little arrangements with the Roxbury Strong Boy. And Guiteras, for all his air of unconcern, made his arrangements, too.

On Monday of Holy Week Guiteras climbed the steep stairs to the boxing academy of Professor Mike Donovan, middleweight champion of America, in Fulton Street, Brooklyn, and asked if he could take a course of lessons.

"Have you had any instruction?" the professor inquired.

"From Patsey Sheppard, two years," the student answered.

"Then there's nothing I can teach you," Mike exclaimed. "Patsey is the best teacher going."

"That's just what he said about you," Guiteras urged. "He said that if he had overlooked anything, you'd find it and show me what to do. I'm getting ready to meet a good man." Whereupon they stripped and went to work. Mike himself told me what happened.

"As soon as we had shaken hands," he said, "I made a quick feint at him with my left. I never had met an amateur that wouldn't break ground and skip away when I feinted him. But this fellow? Phew! He held his ground and let go a right uppercut like a flash. It came so quick I hadn't a chance to step back; so I pulled in my chin as it whizzed up at me. Even then it caught me on the forehead and drove me back against the wall. My golly, what a punch! Why, Bill, it was so hard that it raised a little horn on my forehead! I jumped into a clinch, held him till my head cleared; then asked: 'Where did you get that uppercut?' 'Patsey Sheppard,' he said. 'Well, it's the finest I ever saw,' I said, 'and I'll bet no man living can get away from it.'"

Mike found little room for improvement in his new pupil, and they worked together every day during the two weeks of Easter vacation. "He had the speed of a lightweight," said Mike to me, with the enthusiasm he always showed when talking of a good man, "and I had to step my fastest to keep up with him. And how he could hit—a punch with a snap in it like a bullet!"

The boxing fans of Harvard, and a few hundred other students who had heard that there was a pleasant fight in store, gathered in Hemenway Gymnasium on the day of the engagement. In the locker room Guiteras and the Roxbury Strong Boy were introduced to each other.

"How are you? How's the health?" asked the strange youth in a voice that rumbled like the deep roar of a distant lion, at the same time gripping the hand of Guiteras in a crunch that left it numb.

"Fine, thanks," the student replied. "May I ask your name?"

"My name is John L. Sullivan," rumbled the Strong Boy. "You want to look out for yourself to-day. I'm liable to knock your block off."

Guiteras smiled. I see that smile again as I write these words—so patient, a little amused, full of good nature, and with a certain air of tolerance, as if he were making allowance for a big talker whose bark was worse, probably, than his punch. He was soon to find his mistake in that belief. John L.'s words were boastful, but his punch was dynamite.

They faced each other in the ring, a few minutes later. Guiteras was the taller by an inch and a half, and his fair hair and blue eyes were in vivid contrast with the blue-black hair and dark eyes of Sullivan—eyes a grayish-brown hazel in repose, but now black and burning as he glared at his adversary. One looking at him thought instinctively of Blake's "Tiger, tiger, burning bright."

The Strong Boy weighed little more than one hundred and seventy-five pounds, against one-eighty for Guiteras, but his hitting machinery was far heavier. The muscles of his brawny neck spread out and down to his sloping shoulders as the lower part of an oak slopes out to the crown of the tree. His body was thick, with a high-arched

chest, prodigiously muscled, though smoothly, and tapering to a trim waist. His arms were long, thick and smooth. His hips were big, but the legs were surprisingly slender for so stalwart a man, although they were serviceable legs, capable of sprinting the hundred yards in eleven seconds—in smooth shoes and without training.

Physically Guiteras seemed like a stag or a fine race horse with his high spirits well under control; while Sullivan crouched forward on the edge of his chair like some fierce, rugged carnivore, all gathered for the fatal spring. He looked like the genius of destruction. The physical contrast between the two was no greater than the contrast in their manner: the student was placid, well bred, nodding and smiling at a friend here and there in the throng; the Strong Boy staring intently at his adversary as if he were hungry to devour him.

This was the real John L. Sullivan, unspoiled by success and dissipation, the Sullivan the world never knew. He was a temperate youth then, working hard every day at his trade, drinking nothing more than a glass of beer with dinner or supper, keeping good hours, and proud of his ability to knock any man unconscious who dared to face him. Billy Madden, his first manager, told me much about him, and summed him up in a phrase of sad regret: "John was a good boy then."

At the call of the referee, the two advanced to the center, touched the palms of their five-ounce boxing gloves in a perfunctory handshake at arms' length, circled cautiously wide of each other, and returned to their corners. The referee called "Time!" and they sprang out toward each other, Sullivan's dark, burning glare devouring his opponent; Guiteras' smile disappearing while he studied his enemy, as if the Strong Boy presented the most interesting, and perhaps risky, problem that he had ever faced. In this battle, as in all

he ever fought, Sullivan was the aggressor. His style was to chop down the victim's guard with his left and follow with his right fist, swung like a club or shot in like a cannonball. (That is the description given by Mike Donovan, the master analyst of boxing form, who fought Sullivan soon afterward.)

Sullivan's chopping left this time hit nothing but empty air; for Guiteras had checked his own advance for the fraction of a second, then whipped up the right uppercut we were looking at in Donovan's Academy a few moments ago. It caught Sullivan clean on the point of the chin, threw him backward almost in a somersault and dropped him to the floor. He did not sit on the floor; he bounced off it, came instantly to his feet and, with a bellow of rage, plunged once more at the first man that ever stood toe to toe with him and gave as good as he received. The tiger charged, but the stag slipped aside.

Gone for good was the slightly amused smile of Guiteras; in its place came a frown of intense concentration. Sullivan's glare, afterward famous around the world as the hypnotic weapon that doomed men to destruction and turned their strength to water, did not frighten him, but it assured him that he was facing the most deadly antagonist he had ever known. The Strong Boy leaped in again, both fists flying. The student slipped away, now to the right, now to the left, as he saw a greater amount of clear space to maneuver in. Each man was up on his toes, moving with grace and speed and nicely poised weight that made their action more beautiful than any classic dancing.

Sullivan's plunges were direct, straight ahead; Guiteras' avoidance was always oblique and always surprising. He had studied the art of footwork under Sheppard and under Donovan, and this gave him an advantage; for the Strong Boy had never been schooled by any teacher and had only his natural

speed and fury to depend upon. Try as he would, he could not lay a glove on the shadowy Harvard man.

"Come on! Come on!" the burly youth growled, slapping his left palm on his thigh as he dashed in. "Come on! What d'ya think this' is—a prize waltz?" Guiteras wasted no breath on words. Darting about as swiftly and bewilderingly as a ray from a mirror, he let the Strong Boy spend his strength on rushes that got him nowhere and in chops and swings of his thick arms that beat the air, as St. Paul had seen disappointed Roman gladiators do in his day. So the first round ended with the one knock-down Guiteras had inflicted as the only real execution done—unless the beholder knew enough to value his adroitness in avoiding destruction as a marvelous display of boxing skill. No toreador evading the deadly lunges of a maddened bull ever danced more nimbly than the student danced through those three minutes.

During the regulation rest of one minute after the first round Sullivan seemed to be breathing a little faster than his opponent. He glowered across the ring at him and, with a derisive grin, remarked to his second, "I'll put him away in the next!" in such full voice that every syllable could be heard throughout the silent hall. Guiteras said nothing; merely smiled as if he were faintly amused.

Time was called again—ringside gongs had not been invented then—and the boxers flew toward each other. Guiteras fended off the right swing that followed Sullivan's chopping left, and once more swung his right in a lightning uppercut; but Sullivan bent his head a trifle downward and to the right, so that the blow hit high on the cheek bone, causing shock that slowed him down for a few moments and raising a red lump which presently turned grayish blue—the appearance which ring men so aptly call a "mouse."

With a shake of his head the Strong Boy cleared his brain and again dashed in. Guiteras sprinted. As Sullivan gathered himself after a futile rush, Guiteras shook him with a straight left full on the mouth, followed at almost the same instant with the right uppercut. Had that blow landed on the chin, it might have changed the course of ring history; but the Strong Boy half evaded it, and it only made the mouse a little bigger. He tore after Guiteras more furiously than ever, and the student had to use every dodge and twist of footwork in his repertory.

In the third round Guiteras did not dance quite fast enough, and a right swing of Sullivan's smashed him on the left shoulder, seemingly hard enough to drop an ox; but the adroit boxer flew stumbingly to the right for two or three steps, then caught his balance by almost a miracle of skill, and skipped away. Sullivan's deep bass growl could be heard, but the spectators were yelling so loudly in their admiration of their classmate's agility that the words John L. uttered could not be distinguished. Probably they were not too polite; for his vocabulary was often Rabelaisian, especially when inspired by anger. He had never been up against a boxer who was at the same time his equal in youthful endurance and his superior in skill, and he was getting madder every minute. I say "madder" advisedly; for John L. always flew into a berserker rage at any adversary who lasted more than a minute or two in front of him.

Fourth round: "Come on in and fight!" roared the Strong Boy as he leaped across the ring; but Guiteras slipped aside, let him fly past, and nipped him with a straight left jab before he could turn fully around to face him. Again the rush; again the swift sidewise flight. Sullivan never had met such tactics before, and, as matter of fact, did not meet them again till eleven years later, when Charley Mitchell

danced out of his reach on the rain-softened turf of Chantilly. Mitchell had tried to sprint out of his way in the bout at Madison Square Garden in 1883; but he had nothing like the speed of Guiteras; so Sullivan caught him and battered him through the ropes.

Corbett was the first man to use fast runaway tactics against Sullivan in a fight to a finish, and that was many years later, when John L. was far past his prime. To try to guess what would have happened if Corbett had met Sullivan at his best would be a waste of time. More hot words have been uttered over that problem, possibly, than over any other athletic event in the last generation. Argument about it never reached a conclusion. It was like speculating over what would have happened if Grouchy had come up in time at Waterloo. Only one thing is certain: Each man would have given a good account of himself in the world's greatest single combat; for Sullivan saw in every antagonist only one more victim to be knocked out, and the magician Corbett in the ring never feared any man.

And this is certain: In the ring at Hemenway Gymnasium that day Sullivan was not able to catch Guiteras with a damaging blow, though he continued to leap at him without ceasing. He let fly his deadly right swing again and again—the blow that was soon to revolutionize the art of boxing and change it from bare-knuckle combat on the turf to glove fighting within doors under Queensberry rules—and Guiteras evaded the swing nearly every time.

When it did land, it was not on a vital spot, but on shoulder or arms, and in the act of overtaking the victim, which robbed it of force. Had one of these blows caught Guiteras coming in, or even standing still, it would have floored him. He had all he could do to save himself from a knock-out, and he occasionally countered on the Strong Boy's ribs or jaw.

Men who saw the conflict never could give details of the last two minutes of it. The ring seemed to be full of flying fists and darting, swaying bodies. "The fastest fighting I ever saw!" or "The most furious smashes I ever saw!" or some such phrase is the best description I have ever been able to gather from those privileged ones who looked on. The gladiators were still in a hot exchange when the three minutes of the last round expired—so hot that neither one heard the call of "Time!" and both kept pounding away until the referee thrust himself between, parted them, and again shouted: "Time!"

Breathing hard, the boxers stepped back and faced each other, while the crowd clapped their hands and cheered with impartiality. Perhaps some of them dimly sensed that they had been looking at one of the greatest fights since the days of Homer. Slowly the smile returned to the face of Guiteras as he reached out, shook the hand of Sullivan, and said: "Thank you for a lively go." The Strong Boy shook his hand warmly in return and, as if speaking from a remote height, kindly replied: "You're a good young fellow." Slowly they made their way through the crowd and back to the locker room. When they had rubbed down and changed to their ordinary clothes, they shook hands for the last time.

It is easy to understand why neither man cared to talk about the encounter. Sullivan never could have forgotten it; for the knock-down Guiteras gave him was not only the first that ever happened to him but was the last until Corbett knocked him down and out at New Orleans, in 1892. (I do not count the time Mitchell dropped John L. in Madison Square Garden, in 1883, for the weight of evidence shows that the tricky little Englishman swung on him as they were shaking hands, and so committed

what was morally, even if not legally, a foul.)

And if pride kept Sullivan silent on the subject, it was pride that kept Guiteras silent, too; for he soon attained a high standing in the medical profession in New York City, not only as a delightful man of the finest character but as an able physician, and he seemed to dread anything that would connect his good name with pugilism.

When I met him, a dozen years later, as a fellow member of the New York Athletic Club and a boxer, and tried to get from him firsthand information on the subject, his face flushed and he said, "Oh, that incident is exaggerated."

"But," I persisted, "we all know that you are the only man who ever knocked Sullivan down."

"Oh, nonsense, nonsense!" said the doctor, and left.

Doctor Graeme H. Hammond, president of the club and for many years an intimate friend of Doctor Guiteras', cornered him one day and asked: "Why can't you tell me something about your go with John L.?"

Guiteras replied: "Oh, pshaw! It was nothing but an ordinary boxing bout."

"Oh, no," Doctor Hammond persisted; "there's nothing ordinary about knocking John L. Sullivan down when he was at his best."

"Wel-l-l-l," Guiteras acknowledged slowly, and smiling tolerantly, "perhaps it was a little unusual. I know I had to give the best I had."

And that is the only time, so far as I could ever learn, that the genial doctor admitted his participation in one of the most stirring ring contests known to man. If, by a series of miracles, it could be repeated to-day, they would have to build a bigger stadium than ever to hold the crowd that would gather from all parts of the world.

More contributions by Mr. Hemmingway will appear soon in THE POPULAR.

The Headfirst Fool



By

Holman Day

In Four Parts—Part III

Author of "In the Tall Timber," "North-woods Stuff," Etc.

United States Marshal Ware had troubles. His deputies had been sent to the border on the smuggling problem, and had failed. Besides, his son Sandy, who was also a deputy, had become a boxer, which infuriated the marshal. Sandy offered to give it up if his dad would send him to the border, but Ware ordered him out on a post-office-robbery case in Cross Harbor—and the young man went there with Inspector Snow. Snow arrested Lovelace Watts, a darky ex-convict, and then relaxed on the case, putting Sandy on guard over Watts. Sandy had known Watts when the latter was in prison, and they had been friends. Convinced of Watts' innocence in the present case, the deputy promised help. Then, when Watts offered information about the border, Sandy and he joined forces. Sandy routed out Postmaster Jeffers and made him confess and produce the missing money. Then Sandy sent Jeffers, in the custody of Watts, to report at his father's headquarters. Snow was furious, but Sandy explained. Then, that being done, the young deputy fell in with an Angus Macdougall, a guide, and, posing as Alex MacPherson, went to the border. There he entered into the stronghold of the Bantam, mysterious boss of the border smugglers.

CHAPTER X.

A FETTER OF FRIENDSHIP.

THE two voyageurs had eaten a late snack on the river shore, before reaching the goal. They so informed Duplisse when he ordered one of his men to put food on the table, but he insisted and they all ate of cold

venison and corn bread, washing down a dessert of cookies with hot tea.

Duplisse was loquacious during the meal and continued to talk while they sat for a time with their tobacco. But his verbosity was well screened by caution. Jules Laframier had dropped more in the way of details of operation than Duplisse revealed in a long eve-

ning of chatter. Once he shrugged his shoulders when he checked himself in what might have been an exposure of certain plans. "Mais, oui! I do moch thinking for all! But I keep my thinking to myself till soch and soch has been done. Then they make talk about eet while I do more thinking all private for anodder job."

Sandy was not irritated by this swaggering complacency in prowess; on the contrary he found it interesting and in a way to serve his purpose. Plainly, Hartin Duplissee had been able to avoid any real come-uppance until then. For a nature such as he was showing—vaunting, cocky, arrogant, self-satisfied—a decisive slam to earth would be a catastrophe. Couple ridicule with the slam, and Duplissee was done for in that region. Sandy had his sharpened understanding of effective methods in the undoing of braggarts. Inside the ropes of a ring he had often made raillery one of the elements of conquest.

The Bantam went on, clinching conviction in Sandy:

"When it happen I evaire do bad thinking—get leeked—bah! I queet my job as boss. But dat man who can teep me ovaire—he don't come along yet!"

"You're sizing it right, chief," agreed the young man. "Let yourself be licked and you're laid off from bossing."

"You prattee good dis way?" The Bantam did some footwork and made passes into the air.

"Only so-so," admitted the other. "Fairly good in a scrap, maybe. But nothing to brag about."

"Ah!" The chief cocked his arch brows in complacent triumph. "In de fight I'm best man up in dese part. Eet's better to fight best."

The young man was suitably meek.

Duplissee patted his breast proudly.

"I geeve you some lessons, maybe, in dat slack time. Tell you how to make fine *coup de pied*—crack 'em side o'

head by high kick and swing quick foot. So!"

The camp had no ceiling, only transverse rafters.

Duplissee backed, made a bit of a run, leaped high in air and rolled his body with the momentum of his leap. He touched the overhead beam with the side of his foot and came down with the quick recovery of balance displayed by a falling cat. "One sample of how eet's done," he said airily. "Eet's how I'm best!"

Sandy nodded acquiescence and the subject was dropped with complete amity in understanding.

Before turning in, Macdougall came to his business understanding with Duplissee.

"Alex and I will be sneaking out all quiet at sunup, so as not to wake you lads. We'll be making breakfast for ourselves after we have paddled a bit."

Duplissee cackled a sardonic laugh.

"Wake us! Yo' wake us leetle while ago when yo' come. But we stay wide awake from now teel de sun come up."

Angus twisted a smile.

"I was forgetting, boss. But I've been working daytimes, you know. Your job is handled better between days."

"Oui! While Oncle Sammie snores."

The helpers lighted lanterns. Duplissee said good night to his guests and went away with his men, humming.

For a time Sandy remained as wide awake as the host who had gone out into the night.

The adventurer had been taking matters as they came along and now he was finding it necessary to make some readjustments, as best he might.

He had no taste at all for going on with Angus Macdougall in search of big game. Sandy's big game was already happily located. Getting a bull moose would be tame sport, now that Hartin Duplissee had been sighted.

But the obligation to Macdougall,

hired as a guide, became a heavy burden, a troubling problem. Sandy grappled in the muddled depths of his thoughts, trying to fish up an excuse of some reasonable sort. He could pay Macdougall for the entire job as it had been planned and could call off the trip at this point on the pretense that he had changed his mind about hunting for a moose. But such a freakish performance would be sure to offend the blunt Scotsman—to stir suspicion, and Sandy could not afford to have any doubts attach to him. He resolved, however, to make an effort, even a desperate one, to break away from Macdougall on the morrow and to attack his mission single-handed.

Then slumber came.

He was roused by the guide. In the first peep of dawn they returned to where the canoe had been cached. The banks of the lagoon were swampy, and Macdougall, as he had stated the evening before, had decided to paddle upriver to a regular camping site where breakfast could be made at one of the little ovens stoned for wayfarers.

Sandy was still without a definite plan.

He did manage, while they paddled, to approach the subject in this style: "Do you usually take in only one hunter at a time?"

"Hardly ever only one. I happened to run across you headed this way, as ye know, and I could bring ye along to get my own feet placed for the season. Later, now't I'm here, I'll manage to be head guide for parties like I have taken 'em in past years. Gives me a chance to hire understrappers and collect a percentage from each one. The plan turns me a good clean-up."

"By gorry, I'm hating to take up your time like I'm doing," stated the patron with sincerity. "Angus, if you can get hold of a real party, you can sidetrack me and I won't care a hoot."

"A fine notion you'd have of me,

dropping you before you get your moose to write about," protested the guide.

"But a writer has to have imagination—and I've got it. I have already seen the country up as far as this along with you; I have listened to your stories about big game; I can go back right now and write a whale of a story—all I need to write." Sandy was eagerly earnest.

But stiff-necked Angus had his own code of loyalty to an employer. "Ye've hired me for a full trip and I'll not side-squint at onybody else till you're done and through. Besides, I've fell into a real liking for ye."

Sandy was wishing he had been less companionable.

"It's mighty fine of you to say that, Angus; and I'd like to stick along with you. But, honestly, I'd just as soon hand you the pay for the two weeks or so ahead of us and scoot back home from here. Writers don't like to take too much time to get up an article."

"Aye, noo ye're talking truth! As I read what most of 'em write about the woods I'm sure telling ye they know no more o' the big sticks than they find out roamin' through a city park. And a devil of a thing it would be to have ye dancing back to town now and writing a piece with Angus Macdougall in it and making it fodder so stuck full o' thustles o' meestakes only fules would swallow—and the wise ones would gag. And then last they'd say: 'We'll aye lay off the nincompoop Macdougall o' the Mirimichi.' Why, lad, ye'd drive me to changing my name by reason of such advertising. Na, na! Ye'll e'en go wi' me and be one writer set right!"

He had been snared finely, promising publicity to Angus Macdougall, reflected Sandy, in his sudden ire and rebellion tempted to turn around and fling cuss words, the truth and the paddle at the mulish custodian.

In such a mood he held tongue wholly in restraint, setting his teeth on his pipestem and not putting in a word of his own while Angus babbled on regarding the need of getting facts at firsthand when writing of woods matters, quoting the errors he had detected in the writings which had come to his eyes. "And liking ye as I do for your merry ways, I'm noo thinking that after we get the moose that's promised to your loud cry for big game, I'll keep you on wi' me for anither week, all free o' cost to you, so you may be able to tell all the ither writers of the mistakes they make. What say ye?"

"That's a fine offer! But don't start me to saying anything about it—not now." Sandy was setting his teeth harder against the pipestem.

"And I'd rather you wouldn't, lad. Gabble o' praise I canna stand. I'd rather ye'd be thankfu' and say nowt."

CHAPTER XI.

A LUCKY ESCAPE.

ALMOST immediately the two had a topic which put the other matter out of their thoughts. Rounding a bend of the river they beheld half a dozen canoes pulled on the shore at what, so Angus stated, was the camping haul-out that was their own destination. They saw small tents among the trees; a party had spent the night at the place.

When the new arrivals swung in to make a landing they interrupted a profane argument between two men who were kneeling on the beach, scrubbing iron skilletts with sanded cloths.

"I'm sure glad you've got along, chief," gulped one of the men after an enthusiastic hail. "It has been an everlasting fight about who does which, ever since we started up the river." He held up a partly scoured skillet. "Look at this spider! Grease all caked on and left overnight that way."

Angus had paid no heed to the title of "chief" given him in the first hail. He knew both men; they had served under him and usually called him chief on all occasions of chance meetings. He stepped ashore.

"Lads, there must be a fine slob for a head guide on this trip."

The other man goggled.

"Look out how you call yourself names."

A man in a sporting rig hurried out from one of the tents, pulling a sweater down over his head and body. He had heard Macdougall's voice.

"Thank the good Lord, Mac, you're here at last. This outfit has been in a pickle ever since we started. Why didn't you join us and take charge at St. John?"

Angus touched his cap respectfully but flavored his speech with the sarcasm of a woodsman who had been asked a silly question.

"I'm afraid the answer to that, Mr. Patton, ain't laid down in the last end o' the Old Farmers' Almanick—so I'll have to pass the question back to you and ask ye why I didn't meet ye."

"Say, I wired to you, care of that fishing concern, and told you I'd made my date a month earlier."

"And the fishing-concern folks, getting that telegram after I'd gone on my way, have mailed it into the Mirimichi, no doubt. And that's the answer why I didn't meet ye as usual down the river, Mr. Patton."

"Well, it's all right, now you are here at last, however it happens you're here." Patton flicked a glance at Sandy. "Glad you're bringing along one of your men. Pick out any of these guides I've brought along—I don't care which one—and fire him. That'll ease your feelings a little."

"Excuse me, sir! This gent is my sport—has hired me for a big-game trip. I had you dated on my books for later."

Patton snapped into an autocratic manner.

"I've been hiring you for six years, Macdougall, and I claim my rights, even if there has been a slip-up in getting word to you about a change of dates. Confound it! you're a chief guide, making it your job to handle a big party, such as mine." Again he glanced at the unassuming young man under Macdougall's wing. "No doubt this gentleman will take another guide—or will join this party."

"I stick to my rule and reputation, sir," declared Angus doggedly. "Always finished and done with the job and the sport before I grab on wi' the new. Take it to yourself, Mr. Patton, what word you'd pass about my style, should I drop you in the middle of a trip!"

Mr. Patton, much rasped by disappointment, after sudden, high hope, cursed roundly.

A feminine voice was raised in protest in one of the tents.

"Jim, I'll not endure any more of this fuss and wrangle. Three days of it—and it's growing worse. Call the trip off and start for home. Do you hear?" Other feminine voices indorsed the sentiment.

Patton spread his hands. He appealed to Sandy.

"There you have it, sir. Women mixed in now! I'm in the devil's own mess."

Sandy, on the contrary, was jubilantly seeing his way out of his own mess. He bestowed one of his most angelic smiles on the distressed man from the city and turned on Macdougall with mock ferocity.

"Have ye lost all decency and gallant spirit out of yourself, man? I'm afraid so—and I fire you here and now for being no gentleman where the ladies are concerned."

"But I have told ye why——"

"You have told me so much, Angus, I've already got all I came after. And

now why will you be stubborn enough to make me waste more of my time and yours? Even if this gentleman hasn't a claim on you, the ladies have." He stuck out his hand. "Shake now, and please everybody." He winked.

Macdougall took the outstretched hand.

"When you put it that way, there's nowt to be done except the genteel thing, lad. Still, ye might join this party."

"I insist!" shouted the joyous Patton.

"And I'll compromise," said Sandy, privately thanking whichever possible patron among the red gods of the forest it was who had brought about this glorious escape from a muddle. "I'll join you here at breakfast, Mr. Patton. I'll hitch along with you to the next settlement above here. Then I must be excused to go about my own affairs."

"No excuse for me saying anything except 'Bully!' to that plan," avowed the contented Patton. "All of us can now go about what specially interests us. Take charge, Mac."

Angus turned on the skillet-scrubbing subalterns, to start with, put an end to their time-wasting quarrel by sending one of them on other affairs of the camp and then walked here and there on his first tour of inspection. Sandy strolled with the chief guide. Patton had hurried into a tent to explain to his wife the new aspect of the situation.

"We've had a fine time together to date, Angus, and I'm hoping you lay nothing against me for quitting."

"It doesna' come as a surprise. I've been prepared for summat o' the sort, ever since I came to the hotel the first morning." His drawl had satire in it.

"Oh, say now!"

"I'm a-saying, lad. The size o' your pack helped me in sizing you. Starting for the big-game country but thinking more of the frippery for your lass than about ammunition for a moose. Says I to meself, he'll be skipping across the

border as soon as we're anigh it. Your mind was never all on moose from the start."

In Sandy's smile was artless confession.

"Mac, you're sure a gimlet. You've bore into me proper."

"Oh, I'm well wonted to the symptoms. Lovesick, then homesick—and whoop and awa'! I'm now easier in my mind, and I'll own to it. I'm sure of four solid weeks wi' Patton. No long string on him to be yanked by a woman at home. His wife is along."

The young man patted the other's broad back.

"In the snap of a finger, as you might say, all minds free and all made happy. And by love!" He was making the most of the fine excuse dragged in by Macdougall himself. "Love does make the world go round."

"And heads, too. All for the harm of sensible plans." Angus had mounted the tripod as a critic. "Love is like to make anither mess in these woods. Of Hartin Duplisse I'm now speaking. But no matter. It's scant interest ye're taking in him any more, seeing you're headed for the outside." He turned from Sandy to give some orders to a cookee about fagots for the breakfast fire.

Sandy grabbed the first chance to press questions.

"Why, it's this way," stated Macdougall, "if ye care to know. When I stepped into the lean-to last eve to drink a pannikin o' water, the man who showed me to the pail slyed the word to me that Duplisse is in a fine way to kick the props out from under himself. In a few days he's going to get married."

"What kind of a can has been tied to you in your life, talking about love and marriage that style?"

"We'll stick close to Duplisse and his coming marriage. A fine job I'd have wi' the general subject, talking to

you now when you're on tiptoes ready to run away to a girl with the gewgaws ye're risking jail to get into her hands! You're foolish in your own way. Duplisse is more foolish in his way, because he's going to take for wife the redhead daughter of Finnegan of the Portage. *O-o-o e-e-e!*" whistled Angus. "What a torch o' Tophet is that girl when she's mad! And Duplisse knows it like all the rest in these parts do. But, so it's told to me, he is set on marrying her."

"A glutton for excitement, hey? Wants plenty more along with what he's having out of the job he's on."

Angus put up a rigid forefinger, marking emphasis for his statement.

"He's marrying a barn, lad. That's Hartin Duplisse's first thought. Marrying a barn—with the firebrand girl thrown in. Thinks he can handle her like he has been handling men—and that's where he has turned fool."

"Then it isn't a case of real love making his head go round," declared Sandy.

"He's playing monkey stuff wi' love, and it'll be worse for him."

"But this marrying a barn. What the blazes do you mean?"

"It's too long a yarn. I must get to my job here."

"But, say, Angus, now you've got me interested!" Sandy stepped in front of Macdougall and twisted the cowlick vigorously while he pumped demands and appeals.

The guide squinted quizzically.

"I do mind now what lock o' hair looks like. It's a question mark. You're not much else, yirsel'."

"So I've been told many a time, Angus. But you know what my business is. I have to ask questions before I can write."

"But in this case ye'd best see Finnegan's barn for yirsel', lad. It's not far fra' the Portage. That's a good place for ye to do your crossing of the line,

if you go sly. Mony a good hole by that route. Then you may go look at Finnegan's barn. Ye canna weell miss it. And when ye have gi'en it a gude look ye'll see why Smuggler Duplissee may handily have a fancy for marrying that barn, even if he must take the lass o' the fire locks and the scorching tongue along wi' the barn. I may say this much for a hint. Nobody is allowed any more to build a structure exactly on the boundary line. But the buildings put up before the countries settled on a law are pairmitted to stay. Mighty few of 'em left—but Finnegan's barn is one, and a real prize will it be for a chap like Hartin Duplissee. Go and look at it."

Though both cowlick and tongue urged, Macdougall had no more to say. For that matter, Patton and his wife and their guests were out and now came at Macdougall and engrossed all his attention.

Sandy was obliged to give his own attention to receiving the thanks of the party for his gracious consideration of their needs.

Breakfast served on the clean duff under the pines was a sociable affair.

In mid-forenoon Sandy and his possessions were landed at a hamlet where the river swung within a few miles from the eastern boundary of the States.

A small inn was near the water, apart from the other buildings of the village. The landlord came strolling down when Macdougall hailed from the landing.

On the way up in the canoe, the guide and Sandy had canvassed a plan by which the young man could drop into the life of the village for a day or so.

"For instance, Angus, I'd like to foot it over to the border and size up the lay o' the land before I try to lug my stuff across. And I want to have a look at the barn, and all such. Curiosity, you know." He grinned and flipped his forefinger against the cowlick. "When

I'm dropped at this place put me in right."

"Old Tom Briggs of the inn will even help you to smuggle if you want him to. He's used to seeing most everybody do it."

Therefore, when Briggs arrived at the canoe, Angus confided: "This is my cousin, Alex MacPherson, Tom. Treat him right for the time he wants to stick along with you. Better you feed him, the longer he may want to stay."

Briggs pledged that any kin of Guide Macdougall should have special attention.

Sandy waved his hand to the members of the Patton party, their canoes jockeying in midstream while waiting for the chief guide to join them.

Briggs started back toward the inn, carrying the guest's pack.

Macdougall's smile was broad when he backed his canoe away from the shore.

"If the lass won't be worried, kept too long away from you and the gew-gaws, Alex, I'm thinking ye'd better stay over, and ye may get an invite to the wedding of Hartin and Flora—the flame o' the Finnegan family. Ye sure made a hit wi' M'sieu' Duplissee. Maybe he's to be married in the barn of which he's so fond."

"Angus, that's a mighty fine idea," indorsed the other, who was on the scene for the purpose of seeing much more of Hartin Duplissee, but who excellently imitated the manner of one receiving an idea newly cracked and proffered. "I'll stay over and be there." He turned and hurried after the innkeeper.

CHAPTER XII.

HOW LOVELACE OBEYED ORDERS.

THE inn was a sprawling cottage, little else. To its one-story main part were attached wings and ells in which were the sleeping rooms, all on

the ground floor. Many of these sleeping rooms had doors outside so that the guests could enter and leave the apartments night or day, as they chose. This lack of espionage pleased Sandy.

He immediately proceeded to get on excellent terms with Tom Briggs, a stolid man whose filmy eyes revealed no special interest in other folks' affairs.

When MacPherson, putative New Brunswicker, hinted that he had done a bit of smuggling in past times, the landlord allowed that it was hard finding anybody up that way in these days who wasn't taking a flyer in the game.

"And why shouldn't it be so, mister, when a man can carry something only a few miles and know when he gets it to another place it'll be worth a lot more—even ten times as much in the case o' certain goods? Same article he started with! The profit growing while it's lugged."

"Yes, that's the way of it," agreed Sandy. "And say, I'd like to go over across to Portage to see a friend of mine. I'd be going empty handed, and all that. But the officers are holding something against me—they know my looks—I'm afraid I might get nabbed."

"Prob'ly would be. There's been so much smuggling the guards have growed to be mighty mad. Don't ye s'pose you can change your looks enough so you won't be knowed?"

"I was just wondering about that," admitted Sandy, innocently wide-eyed.

"Got any old duds in your pack? Or shall I lend you some of mine? Anything to help—all you've got to do is call on me."

"That's mighty fine, sir," said the young man, now wholly heartened. "I've got a rig I can make out with. But I reckon they're mighty short and sharp with aliens. How do you folks manage, if you want to go across for an errand or anything like that?"

"Oh, allowance is made all right

when we're going on business. If you're set on seeing that friend, I can fix it for you all hunky-dory. Every day I'm sending my small potatoes over to the starch factory in Portage village. Big cart and a span o' hosses. I'll let you go along as helper for my driver. But don't try to smuggle anything in the load. I can't afford to lose my hitch."

"Great Scott! I wouldn't do anything to risk your property, Mr. Briggs. I'll go clean as a whistle."

"All right. The team will be leaving right after noon meal. Fix up."

Sandy hustled into his room and out of his plentiful stock secured dingy overalls, a flannel shirt and heavy shoes.

Then he went further in disguise, having prepared the mind of Briggs to understand such precautions. He slicked his hair with pomade, flattened it close to his head and pulled onto his poll a dark wig and topped it with an old felt hat. He deftly darkened his eyebrows.

Then he strolled out into the field where Briggs had gone to boss the loading of a cart with the small potatoes sorted from his crop. The landlord took one indifferent glance at the new arrival and went on with his inspection of tubers.

"Want to hire a man, sir?" inquired Sandy, making a test of his disguise.

The other's glance was searching and unfriendly. "I'm taking no risks with a come-by-chance. Beat it!"

The driver of the cart was at some distance, sacking potatoes.

Then Sandy suggested:

"Guess MacPherson is all set for a safe trip if he gets by with you this way."

Briggs whirled and made a complete survey of him.

"Blast me, if I'd know you even now, if I wasn't having your word on it! You're sure a dabster at changing yourself."

Sandy grinned, having had compliments in that line before.

"What'll you be telling your driver, sir?"

"That you're Macdougall's cousin. The man hasn't see you around the house." He turned from the passenger. "Hi, Amos! This is MacPherson, relation of our friend, Angus Mac. You take your time in Portage while he does an errand or two."

It was matter-of-fact commendation; the man nodded and went on with his sagging.

In the afternoon the trip to the border was slow and tedious. The cart went by a winding road that came into the main highway not far from a granite post bearing the inscriptions: "Canada," "United States."

No watchers were on guard at the actual border, a spot in the open country.

On the outskirts of a straggling village a mile or so farther on, a building displayed the barred customs flag, and an overhead banner warned: "Stop. United States Customs Officers." A man smoking beside a window waved perfunctory permission to pass, not leaving his chair.

The driver, teaming his hitch along, replied to a comment made by the passenger:

"Oh, they don't bother with a feller passing reg'lar and knowed to 'em like I be. I could smuggle, of course. I get my bids to do it. But it would be only handling pancake stuff for fly-by-nights, a lot o' risks for small money. A real smuggler has his own ways and his own gang and he don't bother with penny flipping like my cart stuff would be."

"I suppose there's one real head man in the game."

"There may be for all I know," returned the driver, giving Sandy a side squint of protest for inquisitiveness. "But I ain't saying there is, nor calling

any names. It ain't healthy holding your mouth open much along this border; you're mighty like to get something sour or hot heaved down your gullet."

The deputy marshal was getting new light on the reasons why his fellow deputies had not been having luck in locating or identifying Hartin Duplissee as the head of the gang.

"You're exactly right, Brother Amos—and thank you for the hint. I'll keep still."

"Like most the rest of us natives do, both sides o' the line," approved the other, softened a bit by this prompt agreement. "Some of 'em make their good whack by keeping still. Others are afeard o' the slam-whack they'll get by blabbing to make hurt o' the ones who're cleaning up on a good thing; so it's all tied pretty tight in a nice bundle."

He steered the horses into the broad yard of a starch factory from the open windows of which came the noise of grumbling grinders and puffs of steam.

"Do you want more'n a hour? I'll be hanging round here that length o' time."

"I'll be back in an hour whether I find my man or not," Sandy promised. He slid down off the load and went away, making a pretense of haste though he had no destination, though he was hardly daring to hope that Lovelace Watts had been able to keep the appointment made in the night at Cross Harbor.

The plan of sending the darky on the mission to the city had made its appeal in the excitement of that hectic few hours of stampeding action. Now, after the long cooling process, Sandy was leaning to the rueful belief that he had sent the poor chap into jaws that would not readily release an ex-convict who was hitched up in a most amazing fashion with an offense against government property.

The eyes at headquarters would not

view the matter with the clarity of understanding which Sandy, at first hand, was able to manage. He had truly done his best to impress his father by the telephone talk, but the son was fully aware that the marshal was in no mood to accept obediently or unquestioningly Deputy Marshal Ware's opinion or style of execution.

At that juncture Sandy's anxiety and his hope against odds had been whetted to the keenest edge. He did certainly need Lovelace in the enterprises which were ahead.

Sandy had made himself a lone figure in this adventure on the dangerous long border. To call in official assistance at this time would be an act sure to knock galley west all his wild scheme. He had not worked out the details of his plan, such as it was. He could not even give official helpers a cogent idea of what he intended to do. To inform them that his grand object was to catch the ringleader who persistently stuck to his own side of the border would be to offend official sense of what could be done legally.

Even though Sandy's ideas were nebulous at the moment he believed there was a solid core in the nebosity. He was now within reaching distance of the head man. He knew the identity of Hartin Duplisse. And this marriage plan of the latter's would bring him to the border line—might be so worked on by craft or bold action that the man wanted would legally come within reach of the eagle's claws.

But the deputy marshal of the United States did need a dependable helper in the emergency, Sandy kept telling himself while he marched toward the business street of the village of Portage. He was remembering how he had warned Lovelace to make his bigness, to keep in the open.

When the officer turned a corner into the single street of trade, the most conspicuous object in sight was a giant of

a man at the farther end of the thoroughfare. The natural height of this individual was increased by a yellow turban; he wore a robe of faded red. Sandy could not see the face of the strange character; the man was sauntering away from the observer.

Identification, however, was not long delayed.

The giant was calling out sonorously. And the voice was the voice of Lovelace Watts.

"Gee whiskers!" gasped the mentor. "That's what I call following orders to the limit, plus eleven!"

Sandy took his stand in front of a store, lounging against a porch post in the pose of a loafer, noting that Watts had swung about and was coming back up the street. He was announcing, and was attracting much attention from bystanders:

"Heah's de rale and on'y Congo voodoo doctor. Sells yo' de magicking water brewed outn de poontoo plant. Heah's de rale and on'y Ess Ess Esser. Means Second Sight Specializer. Ah sees what's past, what am, what's gwine to happen. Ah sees fo' yo' what yo' friends fur off is doin'. Ah finds what's been lost. Yassuh! Nuffin' can be hid frum dis secon' sighter. Now Ah goes into ma office in de hotel, to stay fur one hour. Come one, come all fo' de seunce! Come to buy de poontoo water dat cures de sick and de sufferin'!"

He swung majestically off the street and entered the village tavern.

Several persons followed at his heels.

Sandy accosted a white-aproned grocer who stood in the doorway of the store. "How long have you had the wiz in town, mister?"

"Two-three days. He comes out on the street every little while and drums up trade."

"He's allowed to operate, eh?"

"Oh, we ain't fussy up this way if a feller minds his own business and ain't hurting anybody. And 'bout the first

thing the doc done when he struck town was tell Lem Dollin, deputy sheriff, where four of his sheep and a cow had strayed to in the woods. So Lem paid him two dollars and gave him the backing of the law."

"Fair enough!" acknowledged Sandy. "Some of these voodooers do have the gift—there's no getting back of that."

"Young feller, now you're tooting!" declared the grocer with enthusiasm. "Up here in the woods we know better about such things than city folks do. We've got natural bone setters and charmer men in the timber camps, and they have put over some things the regular docs can't, a lot o' times. Oh, I'm lib'ral when it comes to things I know is so, even if I can't understand 'em!"

This was no idle chat for Sandy; he had promptly undertaken to make sure of Watts' standing in the community and had tried to add his bit of support.

"And we're going to get the prof to tackle a mighty big thing," the grocer proceeded. "A mystery that's hid in these woods around here somewhere." He swung his arm in a wide circle.

The officer's interest flashed like powder touched by a spark. Ever since Jules Lefronnier had blabbed about the system employed in secreting aliens in squads, Sandy had mulled the situation in his thoughts. Nothing much had come from his ponderings. Only a small army could currycomb that broad pelt with its tangled mane of undergrowth and trees. And he was up there to put over something single-handed!

"A mystery, eh? What mystery?" he prompted, opening his eyes on the grocer.

"Mystery of what's become of Jerry Lennard, mister. One of our leading farmers, well fixed in money affairs, nothing in the world to drive him to run away. But he dropped out o' sight one day last spring and not hide, hair

or sign of him has been seen since. Oh, we've hunted all we've had time to, o' course. And the family has offered five hundred reward. They'd like to know something sure and settle the estate. Settle scandal, too. There's always a few tongues to say that a man who has disappeared has run off with some one. But Jerry went off in his overalls and with an ax. There's plenty o' holes in them woods for a man to fall into. So, as I say, we're going to ask the doc to second-sight it into the hole where Jerry is apt to be moldering away."

Sandy felt the glow of satisfaction warming his heart. In this case he had a seer under full control and could time mystic revelations to suit the needs of the situation when his plans were developed.

The grocer's next words helped the sense of general contentment with which the deputy marshal was accepting affairs.

"It ain't much use to try to turn out a hunting bee right at this time when the farmers are busy cleaning up on the potato harvesting. Most over now, and then we'll get the doc busy."

"And I'm betting you'll get results," Sandy encouraged further. "Don't fail to try it, mister."

"Well, I'll say I won't fail," stated the grocer, revealing his personal interest a bit more clearly when he added, "not with my chance to set up a table and peddle tonics and picnic lunches at the round-up place of the searching gangs." He swung into the store to wait on a customer.

Sandy hurried down the street to the hotel. Several men were coming out. "Is this voodoo doc any good?" he queried.

"He's the pickles' vinegar!" declared a spokesman.

"Pretty sour, eh?"

"I didn't say he was a lemon," was the indignant defense. "He's the real

goods. Told me I'd done right to hold onto my potato crop—and a buyer in the hotel office just now offered me a lift of ten cents a bushel, not two minutes after what the doc told me."

"Good. Guess I'll try him myself. I'm mighty anxious to find out about 'something.' And the young man's tone was convincing—he was on edge to find out what had happened at headquarters!"

CHAPTER XIII.

A WIZARD INDORSED.

AFTER Sandy had waited for a few minutes in the hotel's office a door at one side of the room was opened and the ebon mystic appeared, ushering out the client who had been in séance.

"Hope I'm next, professor," said the young man, accenting his respects, advancing and grimacing significantly to betray his disguise when he noted Watts' blank nonrecognition.

Sandy was proud of Lovelace Watts' perfect control of features and emotions; the mentor was making a bit of a test in the way of further assuring himself that his aid could be depended on in emergencies.

Not by a flicker of the eye did the darky exhibit recognition.

"If none o' dese gents is ahead o' you and waiting fer me," he stated, indicating men who were loafing in the office, "Ah done take yo' nex'."

"Go ahead, stranger, if you're in a hurry," said one of the loiterers.

Sandy had entered with haste, displaying urgency.

"Thank you. I am in a bit of a rush." The new client hurried past Watts into the consulting room and the latter closed the door and locked it. Then Sandy pulled off his turban and fairly split his face with a grin of delighted welcome.

"Lovelace, you're some operator—according to orders. I get you—get you all the way! Only, how in the

blue blazes did you happen to think of this scheme? Ding-ragget! it just fits in with some things I want to put over."

"It didn't take any special t'inking, Mas' Sandy. After Ah done got away from yo' dad——"

"And some job that was, I'll bet."

"Yassuh! Ah'll be telling yo' 'bout dat soon. Yassuh, Ah done got away and Ah duck round to a place where Ah done boahd once wid some colored folks and Ah git dis rig-out dey hab lay away to keep fer me." He patted the faded red robe. "Ah trabbel once wid a pitchman—kerosene torch, and work de crowds on de medicine wagon. Ah sing songs, tell de fortunes—Ah done know all de tricks of telling fortunes, yassuh—Ah help sell de poontoo medicine. Steep de hay in wash boiler—de hay tea is poontoo medicine." He rumbled a chuckle.

"You couldn't have picked a better dodge to make your bigness with up here," commended Sandy. "Now about dad," he prodded anxiously. "Was he savage?"

"Lawdy, lawdy! He done chawnk raw meat!" stated Lovelace lugubriously. "An' Ah done got my orders 'bout yo', Mas' Sandy. No odder way could Ah git away frum him, 'cept to swear Ah'll do what he order."

"Well," invited the son resignedly, "pass me the bad news."

"Ah'm ordered by him to take yo' by de scruff o' de neck, lak' a cat lugs a kitten, and carry yo' in and drop yo' front his daisk."

"Yes? I told him over the phone it was rigged for you to come to me wherever I was. He wanted to know all about where you'd find me, hey?"

"*'Wanted'* to know!" squealed the black man, pitching his tone to a distressed falsetto. "He done make hisself into a sledgehammer of sheriff, warden and marshal, all togedder, and he done pound me turrible and awful!"

"Fists? Not with fists, man?"

"No, sur. No fists. Tongue! Ah'd radder he'd use fists and make me blue along wid ma black. But dat tongue o' Mas' Stilton Ware, it done cut t'roo de hide."

Sandy put out his hand.

"We'll shake on that, Lovelace. I'm mighty sorry you had to stand for it."

"And if Ah don't fetch yo' in, lak' he say for me to do, he send out word all ober de State to hab me pinched."

"But what for?"

"He didn't bodder to tell me."

"He can't arrest you without a reason of some kind."

"No trouble for him to fish one up, Ah'm guessing, Mas' Sandy. Ah've been in State prison. Dat's enough."

"I don't know but you're right." The deputy rose and assumed a fierce demeanor, though his eyes twinkled. "Your record makes you a suspicious character." He dredged out of his pocket his badge. Immediately he replaced it. "I arrest you! In the name of the United States. On general principles. And now I'd like to see another deputy marshal cut in. I'm paroling you, Lovelace, to go on with work that'll be helping me and the government. And when the work is done we'll go into headquarters and you can pick me up outside the United States marshal's office and carry me to that deck and tell dad to use me for a paper weight."

Watts made further inspection of Sandy's appearance, again rumbling his laugh.

"Mah sakes, if you're looking lak' dis when Ah tote yo' in, he'll heave yo' into de waste-paper basket and send me away to git de rale Mas' Sandy. 'Cept fer de wink yo' give me out dere, Ah wouldn't 'a' knowed you."

"Hope that goes for all others up this way. Listen, Lovelace. I've been able to get the low-down on the ring-leader. All there is to do now is get him over on this side of the border,

lick him aplenty, catch him with the goods to make the arrest legal, locate the hiding places of rum and dope and aliens on this side—and—and a few little things like that. It'll be a fine clean-up. You and I. Just we two. We'll do it."

Watts opened mouth and eyes and clucked queer sounds.

"On'y dat, hey? On'y dat little mite to do? Goob-eyed catfish! Wuh—wuh—whaffur yo' take up two men's time, doing nuffin' more'n dat?"

"See here, Watts. We've got to be considerably like pals in this work; but don't you go to getting fresh."

"Ma soul! Mas' Ware, Ah wasn't meaning to sass! But yo' done jump me."

"Keep on jumping, but jump the right way after this. Lovelace, we're going to have a lot of helpers. They don't know as yet they're going to help. They won't know it when they're helping. After it's all over they won't even know they have been helping the government. Now listen close: I get it straight that those hiding places I've spoken of are scattered all around in the woods this side of the border. And he's where you'll fit—keeping right on in this line you're in. Men will be coming to you to ask you to use the mystic eye in locating a man named Lennard who disappeared some months ago. He went off one day with an ax and in his old clothes. There's gossip that he may have run away. You tell 'em it isn't so. Say he fell in a hole. Be indefinite about where that hole is. Only say it's a hole with trees around it. And when the crowds gather I'll grab in, and see that a line-up is made to sweep from the border into the State, each man in the sight and hearing of another man. See? And that'll mean pin-pricking out every nook and cranny. Zowie! It'll be like tipping over rocks to see the bugs run. I've still got to think up my scheme for coralling the

rush," he admitted ruefully. "I've been having so many other things to think about. But never mind. It will be taken care of. You stick right here on your job of magic-eyng. I'll keep in touch with you. It's all fixed for me so I can be dropping across the line every day."

"And how about licking dat ring-leader?" asked Lovelace with anxiety.

"I'm reckoning on tending to him all by myself. May need you for a little side stuff. I'll do more thinking and let you know. One thing at a time, Lovelace. Now I must be rushing. I'm in a devil of a hurry." He started for the door. Then he halted and swung about.

"Oh, by the way, old top. I was forgetting all about Postmaster Jeffers. What did they do to him?"

"Lawdy, Ah dunno, Mas' Sandy. Ah was took up wid ma own case. Le's see. Ma haid was suah in a whirl down dere. But as Ah ricollocks, Mas' Stilton Ware he say Ah was crazy, doin' lak' Ah done. An' de man was crazy, too, he acting lak' he done. An' yo' was crazy, too, an' Ah must fetch yo' in so all us crazy fellers could be lock' up in de loony cage fo' de doctors to tend to. Yas suh, dat's about what I ricollocks!"

"And there must be another one fit to be locked up in the bughouse. That's Snow. He must be crazy by this time, now that he has hit headquarters and knows what has happened. And maybe dad and the district attorney are having trouble with their minds, too. But I can't afford to have my own mind muddled up by worrying about what's happening down to the city. Sit tight, Lovelace. See you soon."

He ran out and banged the door.

Accosted by a prospective patron of the seer, a man in the office, Sandy replied: "Sure, he's a wiz! He's been telling me a whole lot of things I wanted to know about. Right off the

reel. Pass the word that the Congo voodoo doc knows his stuff," he declared emphatically, planting indorsement for the benefit of the Lennard case.

Sandy hastened back to the starch factory and climbed up beside the waiting driver. When they were on their way the young man brought up the subject of Finnegan's barn, but casually, merely in the way of chat.

"Cousin Angus was speaking of it as a bit of a curiosity."

"It is," Amos admitted.

"Angus said I'd better take a look at it—and that's about all he did say."

"And I'm saying no more," stated Amos, sticking to his policy of little talk about the affairs of the border. "But I can fix it all easy if you want to have a look at the barn. This branch road to the left takes us past Finnegan's, and I may as well go that way home because I don't need to pass the custom house, going back empty." He pulled the reins and diverted the horses to the other road.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MARRIAGEABLE BARN.

FINNEGAN'S barn was in the center of a field that was a circle as if a cooky-cutter had been used on the forest. The road which passed on the edge of this field was a rutted stretch showing evidence of little travel that way.

The middle section of the barn was old and weatherworn. On each end of this structure, which was planted squarely on the international line, new sections of considerable length had been added. Both ends had broad double doors, now opened. Sandy, from his seat on the cart, could look the length of the barn as if he were viewing into and through a covered bridge. The contraband possibilities of Finnegan's barn were suggested to his mind.

In the past the deputy marshal had heard, acting as court bailiff, cases where similar border barns were concerned. One deputy collector of customs, located near the line, had made a careful estimate of growing crops on State farms in the section and had worked up an interesting case against certain agriculturists whose shipments of products exceeded generous estimates of fertility twenty times over.

Sandy put some questions to Amos, concealing any special interest.

"Well, MacPherson, I can say something along that line because I'm saying as how Finnegan has never taken Province-grown truck into one end of his barn and shipped it free of duty as stuff raised in the States. That's sticking to my rule never to say as how a feller up this way *has* done something. Finnegan hasn't. Can't say as to why Finnegan has lately stretched his barn. None o' my business."

The officer kept to himself his opinion as to why the law-abiding Finnegan had extended his line-straddling barn to such an amazing length. He merely asked: "And is that yonder chap Finnegan—the man in the dooryard?"

"That's Finnegan."

"Any reason why we can't pass the time o' day with him?"

Finnegan himself helped out on any doubts the conservative Amos might have been entertaining. He heard the sound of the cart wheels, glanced up from some work he was about, hailed and waved his arm in invitation.

The driver stopped his horses and he and Sandy jumped down and went toward the house. This building was well on the States side of the border.

"Mighty glad to see you passing, Amos," Finnegan called while the two were still at a distance. "I'm able to give you an invite to the girl's wedding and I want you should take the word to Briggs and his folks and anybody else over your way to come one, come

all. Barbecue in the afternoon, early. Then fun from that time on. And who's this?" he inquired, when Sandy came closer.

"Angus Mac's cousin, Alex MacPherson, Squire Finnegan. He's stopping with Mr. Briggs."

"Oh-ho! Good! 'Tis open house I'm making, MacPherson. The more the merrier, is the word that's out! Do ye be coming on my invite?"

"Thank you, sir, if the when of it is before I'm passing on my way down country."

"Saturday night of this week, MacPherson. That's not long to wait from this Tuesday, man."

"Not long, sir, and worth waiting over for. I'll come. And who may the happy man be?" Sandy queried naïvely.

"Hartin Duplisse, and a mighty smart lad. The girl's mother is of the Acadian stock, so she and the lad are handsomely agreed and I'm satisfied even if there isn't a big 'O' in front of his name." Finnegan laughed. He was a frankly cordial Celt, ready to be garrulous in discussing family affairs: "As for the girl——"

Sandy snapped his gaze past Finnegan, jumped by the shrill voice of a girl.

"I have a tongue to do the talking for myself when talk is needed." The speaker, a buxom maid, came out of the house.

This was Flora of the flaming hair and the scorching tongue, Sandy perceived. She was blistering the visitors with a stare of disfavor. She gave her father his share of the look.

"And some of my talk is needed for these strollers," she announced, clicking her teeth.

"Mind your tongue, now!" gasped the father. "Ye're making a shame for us."

A woman's voice called from the house.

"Make her stop, Murty Finnegan!"

"Begorra, if your mother will yank out a handful o' that red hair I'll make so bold as to stuff your mouth wid it, ye imp," declared the father, whipping his courage in front of the callers.

Sandy had been startled by her appearance; now he was more effectually jumped by what she said.

"Try it and I'll bite your fingers off while you're stuffing! I'm warning these men like I'm warning others. There may be no wedding this Saturday night. Come at your risks. And you may see something livelier than a wedding!"

"There ye go again!" wailed Finnegan.

"And so I'll keep on going till my mind is set right."

"And so will MacPherson and I be going," volunteered Amos for the pair. His caution was operating; he nudged his companion, and started away. But Sandy lingered, detecting profit for his own cause in this rebellion. Furthermore, as a self-acknowledged headfirst fool, he was feeling admiration for the courage of this lively feminine exemplar of the trait he possessed. His wide eyes and cheering smile announced his feelings.

"You look honest enough," she informed him with blunt frankness. "I'm asking you, as I'm asking others—hoping honest men in these parts won't stand by and see a girl fooled."

"Will ye be done, now?" demanded Finnegan with fury. "Taking come-by-chances into the private matters o' your home!"

"You're trying to make the wedding public enough," she retorted, unapologetic, unintimidated.

Again she turned on the stranger.

"What are you knowing to, about Hartin Duplisse and his actions? What are his goings-on? What is his talk about me?"

The headfirst fool saw his oppor-

tunity and he used it. He was not allowing the finer qualities of compunction in the matter of a family's private business to block his audacious and desperate attempt to win in the face of the odds he was fighting against.

"Looks like there'd be a general round-up of folks here next Saturday for the wedding, Miss Finnegan. Why not wait till then and put Duplisse to the test? Ask the honest folks to declare about him."

She searched his countenance with sharp scrutiny. "You're thinking I'm the queerest girl ever you've seen, eh?"

"That same are ye!" declared the father with anger and emphasis.

"It's what I'm doing my best to be," she informed the two men. She was wholly serene and satisfied. "There are too many of these languishing Lizzies and simpering Susies standing around here with a finger in the corner of the mouth, swinging and switching." She suited action to speech, making a ludicrous display of bashful coyness.

Vociferated Finnegan:

"Ye're shaming the name and the style o' decent girls, them what are glad to be getting smart lads for husbands and glad to mind what their folks tell 'em to do."

"I'm picking no name that'll be shamed—the name I'll be wearing for the rest of my life, and I'm making sure of the style of the man I marry." She added complacently: "And I'm trying to get a kick out o' the thing. Life is so dead and dull up in these woods, I'm nigh crazy!"

On this declaration, so far as looks could avail, Sandy was giving her three cheers out of the depths of his kindred spirit.

She walked closer to this revealer of indorsing sentiments.

"I see well, sir, you have been hearing some of the talk passed by Duplisse about me."

"I'll be honest and say I've heard

nothing from the man himself." But his tone and manner made his denial merely provocative.

"If not from him, you have heard from others who are passing his words," she insisted. She wagged her forefinger at the long structure spanning the border. "It's his talk that he's marrying that barn—with a redhead thrown in. I dare you to tell me you haven't heard it."

"Sure I've heard it," admitted Sandy frankly.

The father whipped himself into fresh fury, shaking his fist at the visitor.

"Off wi' ye, young rogue! Encouraging her in her foolishness!" He then waved both his fists over his head and advanced on Sandy. But the defiant girl set herself between the men.

"I've found an honest chap at last, and I'll have speech with him. Now mind you, Father Finnegan, if you torch me more, I'll be saying something about the plans you've made with Hartin Duplisse, about what's to be done in that barn. I'll say it now to this stranger. And when a word is sent flying, there's no telling in what doorway it will light. Maybe it will fly right into the window of the United States officers' hang-out."

Finnegan danced up and down, banged his fists together, twisted his body in ecstasy of rage; but he was silent under this threat.

She continued:

"But if you show sense and decency in letting me make my bigness in what's my own business—it's my special and particular affair and you cannot make it otherwise—then I'll be using sense and decency toward my folks, on my own part. I'm doing it different, that's all."

Again Sandy gave her assurance by vivacious signs that she was one after his own heart.

"You see, men," she went on with

mingled jest and earnestness, enjoying the peculiar situation she had built in her zest for novelty and excitement, "if I was in love and going blind into marriage, as too many girls do, I wouldn't be jumping a bit ahead of the times, like I'm doing. But I'm knowing there's more or less business, such as it is, behind this match you're making for me, Father Finnegan. If I make up my mind to help in the business, there'll be a marriage on Saturday. But I'm thinking I'll let the bridegroom be well sized up. Maybe," was her cool suggestion, "I'll put it to a vote of the crowd, about whether Duplisse will make a girl a good husband. He'll stand a fair show that way, for he'll be bringing his friends."

"Ye'll be making it like a political rally, eh?" grated Finnegan. "Shaming all of us, I say, and making a fool o' the good Father Leroux who comes to——"

"Père Leroux shall marry us in the church, later, in good Acadian fashion. But for Saturday we'll have Notary Blais on hand to tie a civil knot—if the vote is in favor."

Finnegan tossed his hands over his head and stamped to and fro in his fury.

The girl crossed looks with Sandy.

"What's your name, young man?"

"Alex MacPherson, Miss Finnegan."

"And in all your travels you've never been knowing to a plan of marriage as queer as this, eh?"

"Never," he assured her soulfully. "It has jumped me good and proper."

"I'm taking your word on it. I am trying to make it queer. But I hope I'm starting something new for other girls to take up. I'm thinking, myself, it's a good plan—making sure of what a husband is and is like to be."

"It is a good plan—and I hope you'll stick on as you're starting."

"You'll be at the—well, Father Finnegan called it a rally! You'll come, will you?"

"You bet. I wouldn't miss it. And say"—his eyes danced—"you're looking for pep, you tell me. Maybe I can add some to the—rally."

"I wouldn't wonder a mite. I thought as much after I'd taken a good look at you when I came out of the house. Perhaps I need that thought of mine as an excuse for talking out all free, as I have."

"No excuse needed. I admire your spunk."

"Well, I need admirers like you to back me at the rally. So we'll let that need stand as my excuse for gabbling private affairs to a stranger. Bring along your friends."

She turned from him abruptly, showing no more interest in him, and went into the house.

Finnegan faced the caller belligerently.

"Ye'll *not* be coming, MacPherson."

"I've promised your daughter I'd come."

"Aye! Come to back her in her crazy motions, eh? I'll not have ye here, I say! I have plenty o' backers of me own. I'll set them onto ye. They'll be making ye over so your friends won't know ye for a long time."

"I'll tell you what, Finnegan!" cried Sandy, his audacity not dulled a whit, speaking out of inspiration that had flashed in his mind. "You go ahead and start up your gang. I'm asking you to do it. Put 'em onto me. The more the merrier." He walked away toward Amos who was waiting beside the truck.

Finnegan followed for a few paces.

"Ye're crazier'n my girl is, fair asking for trouble."

"I'm coaxing for trouble," averred Sandy, not pausing. "Hand it to me when you spot me Saturday. You'll know me, of course."

"Will I ever forget you, you renegade?"

"It's easy to be mistaken. But pick

me out of the crowd. Pick me out, Mister Finnegan."

The raging man, defied in this fashion, shouted to the driver.

"Tell Tom Briggs he's harboring a scalawag. Tell Briggs to send him scampering or lock him in a pen till Saturday's over."

"Tell him yourself," called back the conservative Amos. "I've got business both sides o' the border, but I ain't taking sides in anything else." He climbed to the seat and Sandy hopped up beside him. "Why didn't ye mind me, MacPherson, and come along and stay out o' the mess?"

"The girl was talking to me. I had to be polite and listen," affirmed Sandy demurely.

"Look at the blaze ye're now in, staying even that little while close to that firehead."

"She's a smart girl, Amos."

"She's crazier'n a coot, and everybody in these parts has al'ays said so. Why, MacPherson, she's so set for excitement she got the village o' Portage nigh worked up to hystericks over the Jerry Lennard case. She put on a sheet and went roving around, making folks believe she was Jerry's ghost. When she had drawn a big crowd she pulled off the sheet and give 'em all the laugh and went home."

"Good fun in a dull season, that's all, Amos. By the way, speaking of Lennard, all the men are going to turn out Saturday over in Portage and make a grand hunt for his body."

"How do you know?"

"The great Congo voodoo doc—you've seen him on the street, haven't you?"

"Yes."

"Well, he's going to advise 'em to hunt Saturday because the stars will be favorable," stated Sandy, blandly announcing Lovelace's plans in advance of the latter's own cognizance of what he was to do.

"And they'll go hunting on that coon's say-so?"

"You bet they will."

"Huh! Most everybody seems to be crazy round here, all of a sudden."

"Well, maybe the thing goes in streaks, Amos. I get sort of comfortably crazy, myself, once in a while."

"I ain't doubting that, after seeing you perform with the Finnegan's."

There was hostility back of that remark and Sandy allowed it to block further conversation. Besides, he wanted to do some thinking.

Indulging his comfortable state of lunacy, he shut himself in his room at the Briggs place after supper. He pulled down the shades and made himself as private as possible, keeping the wick of the kerosene lamp low.

Until after midnight he was wholly engrossed, ripping garments taken from the big duffel bag, reforming the strips into another style of garment, having a passable knack with needle and thread. Also, out of cloth bits and whalebone strips, he constructed an article the appearance of which, when it was finished, sent him to bed chuckling and kept a cheerful smile on his features while he slept.

CHAPTER XV.

THE WIZARD.

DRIVER AMOS was very unamiable the next afternoon when Sandy presented himself as a passenger. But the young man was not disturbed by the understrapper's attitude. Sandy had frankly told Briggs about the run-in with Finnegan, and the landlord had listened with the glee of one who found relish in anything that spiced humdrum life.

"If it was going to be wholly a wedding I wasn't cal'ating on the bother o' fixing up and tending out. But according to the looks o' what the trimmings will be, as put on by Flora, I

guess it'll be worth while, MacPherson."

Sandy, his mind on certain trimmings he himself had fashioned in the still watches of the night, agreed that the affair would be worth while, undoubtedly.

The landlord walked with Sandy to the loaded truck.

"Mr. Briggs," said Amos, "I try to keep out o' trouble, myself, and you know it. MacPherson nigh started a fight yesterday, and now I don't like the look in his eyes for this day."

"Amos, you keep your looking straight ahead 'twixt the ears of the nigh hoss," suggested Briggs, after a wink to reassure the passenger, "and you'll be tending only to what you're set to do."

"I'd have been in no fuss and trouble yesterday, Amos, but for you steering me to the Finnegan place," stated Sandy with severity. "I'm asking you to keep away from there to-day."

Amos opened his mouth, but he promptly snapped it shut and kept it closed for the trip into Portage, letting his indignant silence speak for itself—and it spoke eloquently.

"I'll be taking my hour again for my errands," stated Sandy, alighting at the starch factory and starting away without waiting for any reply.

On the main street he loafed along in the manner of one with nothing special to do and came again to the grocer's shop and leaned against the porch post until the trader came into the doorway to do his own bit of loafing between customers.

Sandy gave the man a beaming smile.

"I took your say-so yesterday about the voodoo doc. Went in and had a whack at him—and say, he's all to the good."

"He knows his card like I know my onions."

"When will you be pulling off the big hunt?"

"As soon's there comes a let-up in the potato harvesting."

"I'm thinking there'll be a temporary let-up mighty soon, mister. Finnegan tells me there's a general invitation out for the wedding Saturday. Barbecue in the early afternoon. According to the outlook everybody around here will be making Saturday an off day. Why don't you get the doc busy and start the hunt in the forenoon? The boys will probably be glad to hustle around in the woods and whet up their appetites."

"And let my picnic lunches go begging because the gang'll be looking ahead to Finnegan's feed," objected the grocer. "And it ain't no kind of a job for a wedding day—setting men to hunting for a man's dead body."

"Not so good, of course. But the hits may as well be bunched on a broken day. Come now. Get a line from the doc and give the word. Start 'em out early enough and they'll be wanting bites before the barbecue. It'll be a great day for selling your tonics, anyway."

"It ain't at all as I'd figgered on it," demurred the grocer.

"I'd a lot rather coöperate with you, mister, than go ahead all by myself," said Sandy, resolution in his manner. "But I'll have to be leaving these parts late Saturday or early Sunday, and the doc tells me he'll be winding up here himself at the end of the week. You have prominence and standing here and are the right man to pass the word and stir up the crowd. If you don't do so I'll go to it in my own way because I'm bound and determined to see what happens on the doc's tip."

"That's pretty brash talk for an outsider to make, young feller."

"I guess I am pretty headstrong, but I can't help my nature. You go ahead or I will—there'll never be a better day than Saturday, considering what an off day it'll be anyway."

"Well, of course I shall grab in and make the most of it," said the grocer.

"And I'll tell you what I'll do to help all I can. I'll trot right now to the doc and hand him a ten-specker to peel that mystic eye of his for all it's worth."

The sullenness cleared out of the trader's visage. "That's lib'ral, that's coöperating, and you won't find me sagging back. I get a lot of trade from the outlying districts. I'll pass word all over as how Saturday's the day."

Sandy hopped onto the porch, shook hands on the understanding and hot-footed it down to the hotel.

There was only a moment to wait until the wizard ushered out a patient.

Sandy promptly went into séance.

He came out at the end of ten minutes, wearing the serene countenance of one in whom vexing doubts had been cleared up by the power of occult forces; at any rate, the landlord of the tavern, loafing in the office and greatly interested in results obtained by his mystic guest, so translated the client's expression.

"Making your second trip, I notice, mister. I s'pose you're agreeing with the most of us—as how the doc is a wow."

"He's a wiz—a real one," was the enthusiastic agreement. Then Sandy took this opportunity to make his first test of the possibilities in the plan he had engineered for the seer who was serving the interests of Portage. "By the way, after giving me some tips on my own private matters, I asked him if he could locate a dead body, and he told me he's going to spring something of a sensation. In a couple days or so, he says, the stars will be right so he can tackle the Jerry Lennard mystery—clear it up."

"By swanny, if he can hit *that* nail on the head and then clinch it, he'll be finishing a nice cupola on the rest of his job here."

"Do you think the men of the place and from roundabout will turn to and hunt on the doc's word?"

"Quicker'n a flock o' turkeys chasing a grasshopper! Ginger mighty! the boys for miles around will make a field day of it."

"Better pass the word now to everybody you bump into that it's probably all set for Saturday—an early start, too."

"Gorry, that idea is fine! The boys can do their galloping in the forenoon and then swing around and gobble Finnegan's barbecued ox clear to the horns."

"I hadn't thought of that; but you're right," declared Sandy, faking delighted surprise. "I'm only a stranger in town, you know, and I can't afford to have anybody thinking I'm trying to take any lead in this thing."

"Don't worry. Any one who has ever heard about the Lennard case has a right to be interested and do all he can."

"It has occurred to me that the hunt ought to have a real boss at the head of it. Who is the deputy sheriff?"

"Lem Dollin. And say, Lem is solid behind the doc for what the doc done in locating some cattle."

"Why don't you drop around and tip the sheriff off—and I'll go with you, if I won't be in the way."

"Wouldn't ask nor find nobody else better'n you to go along with me." The landlord yanked his hat off a hook. "It's only a step or two over to Lem's machine shop. Come on."

The deputy sheriff came away from a lathe at the landlord's call over the din of the shop, and the callers were escorted into the little office.

The landlord explained the situation. When he gave credit to the stranger for the suggestion in regard to the deputy sheriff, the officer beamed his approval.

"I felt it would make it official—

handled by the law," stated Sandy. "I'm not suggesting anything to an officer, of course, but if the whole crowd was first sworn in as a posse by you, Mr. Sheriff, it would give the affair what it needs—legal dignity, as you might say, and make you the real captain of the hunt."

"It's got to be done by rule and system and you've said the way to do it. Let's see, what's your name?"

"MacPherson, sir. I've been stopping over with Tom Briggs for a few days and I got interested in the Lennard case when I heard talk about it. That's why I pumped the doc."

"Everybody around here is interested," declared the officer. "And what you have done in the case of the doc shows how an outsider can most always see clearer, coming into a place, than the insiders who are mulling around about their own business. Shows what a dumbhead I am, not thinking of the Lennard case after the doc had posted me on my cattle!" He slapped Sandy's shoulder. "You're bright. Stay over Saturday and I'll make you my side kick."

"Invitation accepted with thanks, sir. It's your regular business to see that a machine is put together right and runs smooth. What you put into the woods Saturday will operate like clockwork, with you handling it."

The conference ended with the harmony of cooperation raised to the nth degree.

Sandy went back to the hotel with the landlord and, after waiting a while, found an opportunity for a quiet word with Watts.

"Prelims all settled, Lovelace. I'd make a good advance man for a circus. I want to try everything once, and maybe I'll take on a job of that sort later on. But our own big show first. At three o'clock Friday afternoon prance out into the street and hand 'em the dope on the Lennard case; as

we've talked it. You'll have plenty of listeners all right."

Before leaving Portage that day, Sandy saw to it that the winged word was given a handsome boost into the air on its way.

The black oracle, it was proclaimed, would go into his mystic trance on the porch of the hotel at three o'clock Friday afternoon and declare himself on the Lennard case.

Metaphorically, Sandy felt the pulse of the populace while he assisted in circulating the information. The men of the place were hard-headed chaps, to be sure, but they had the hidden streak of superstition that is in the most of human nature.

Furthermore, by lucky guesses and by the tricks learned in the fortune-telling game, Watts had hit it off for many patrons in fairly accurate fashion. He had not been absolutely discredited, having shifty wits of his own in playing safe.

Nobody was admitting that he placed any amount of stock in what the darky could reveal. But Sandy found a general inclination to go into the hunt for a lark, at any rate. There had been a dull season of hard work in the fields. Men were hankering for a bit of a spree.

Sandy was vastly contented even when those commenting men showed that they were taking the affair mostly as a joke—at the same time announcing they wouldn't miss the fun.

He had found a plum dead ripe and waiting to be plucked!

He had made sure of a band of searchers who would be headed officially by a deputy sheriff of the county, and he was on edge with excited anticipation, wondering what the beaters of the bush would drive out of cover.

When he rode back over the border with Amos, even that hidebound conservative confided that he intended to take a hand in the hunt.

CHAPTER XVI.

ALL SET FOR THE BIG SHOW.

ARRIVING in Portage early in the afternoon of Friday, Sandy found the mood of amused toleration persisting in all. There was a turn-out promisingly large, however.

From the grocer he learned that many of those who were gathered in groups on the streets were unofficial delegates from outlying neighborhoods and were in the village to get first-hand information to carry back to others who were sticking to their jobs for the day.

"It comes o' my passing the word," averred the grocer with pride, taking all credit. "You were c'rect about it needing a man o' standing like me to start it off right. Even if a lot of 'em are acting out like they're making fun o' the whole idea, you needn't worry about 'em staying away to-morrow."

"Oh, they'll come flocking, mister. It's only human nature to want to be in on it. How many do you figure on, for a guess?"

"Not a man less'n two hundred. I know how many live round here, of course. So I know about how to figger. And the barbecue is going to pull, too, like you said."

Sandy went on his way and found the deputy sheriff on the street.

"Sheriff, the grocer down there says he reckons there'll be all of two hundred men show up for the hunt."

"Sure pop! No less. It come o' my passing the word," stated the deputy with the same pride displayed by the other word passer. "We'll be able to make a clean sweep o' these woods over yonder."

"Of course, you're more used to handling men than I am," admitted Sandy meekly. "And with that badge you have the authority of the law to make 'em do as you say. I'm not going to butt in with any advice."

"I'm asking you to give me all the help you can, son. You've already shown me you're bright. What's special on your mind?"

"Why, only this, sheriff! With two hundred men making the hunt through those woods, you'll have a line-up where there'll be less than thirty feet between each man, if the crowd spreads to make a dragnet a mile long. Seems to me it would be a grand notion to line 'em right along the border for that mile and have 'em sweep in this direction, right into the States, the ends of the line closing in slowly according to signals you give with your rifle, you leading the center of the line."

"Exactly what I've had in mind as the best of half a dozen plans I've thought up. Now that you've hit the same idea we'll call it clinched."

"And you'll swear in the whole gang as a sheriff's posse, I take it, from what you said the other day."

"Sure thing. It'll make 'em feel more of a sense of duty."

"They'll feel it still more if each man totes a gun, eh? A real officer for day and date."

"Every man up this way has a rifle or shotgun in his house. I'll give off orders to carry the word so every man will come heeled."

At this point the two swapped stares. There were bystanders near at hand; several times the deputy sheriff had broken off the conversation to reply to hails from his fellow citizens.

Now Dollin jerked his thumb sideways in invitation and Sandy followed him off the street to the rear of the building.

"Young feller, after talking about guns for the gang, and showing we've both got something extry on our minds, le's get down to cases. Ye're guessing, ain't you, that we'll be routing up something more'n a dead body out of those woods?"

"I've heard more or less gossip while

I've been hanging around here. Couldn't help hearing it. Sheriff," Sandy blurted, grasping the situation by the horns, "now you're going to ask me if I'm an under-cover man for the government."

"Well, something of the sort was in my mind. Guess the idea blazed up a little speck high just now when you talked about guns. You was thinking of something else than a dead body, I could see that much. But lemme tell you! I'm an officer and I've done a little sly work in past times and it has made me madder'n blazes to have anybody snooping into my business when I've been on the job. You may be old Stilton Ware in his second boyhood, f'r all I know. But I do know the style o' men who have been sent to the border for the government. You're so far off the run of 'em I ain't figgering you as an officer. At any rate, I ain't driving you into any lies by asking you questions. It's in another way I'm going to get down to cases."

"That hunting party to-morrow is bound to raise p'tickler hell in them woods. A lot of the boys realize it before starting. I've kept my hands off'm Federal stuff. So have the most of the folks along the border. The cussed old stiffnecks on the government job have given us something besides thanks for any kind of meddling. And the meddling was only little pancake stuff, at best. Didn't amount to a hoot in the way of a clean-up. But I'm no guesser if the job done to-morrow isn't going to be a clean-up, all right."

"It's bound to be, sheriff."

"And your eyes flicker mighty lively when you say it. Now, either you're only a youngster out for excitement, else you're a slick operator with something to put over. Want to say anything?"

"Sheriff, are you willing to leave it that I'm out for excitement? That much is the truth."

"Truth so far's it goes, of course," returned the deputy sheriff with a grin. "And I'm willing to leave it that way."

Sandy put out his hand and the two made a double fist in a firm clasp.

"Sheriff, we'll leave it that way only till Saturday night. I'll say now you're a mighty fine fellow, and I'll say more before midnight to-morrow."

The other was cordial in his response.

"I've got an ear for machinery, and yours sounded all right to me the first time we met. There won't be a yip out of me to anybody, you understand?"

"Thank you, sheriff."

They returned to the main street and sauntered along to the porch of the hotel. A crowd had already assembled in front of the tavern.

Promptly on the tick of three the oracle stalked out and took his stand at the rail.

Men grinned furtively and mumbled remarks, but after a few moments they were impressed by the appearance of the towering figure. There was to be talk about Jerry Lennard and the occasion demanded solemnity; at least, it required the gravity which marks funereal rites.

The voodoo man closed his eyes and crossed his arms on his breast.

Sandy had foreseen what this situation would need—a carefully blending mélange of fact and fancy, guidance not too direct but a bit vague in order that the hunters would feel that they must sweep the whole field of operations.

Watts recited by rote that pronouncement in which he had been drilled by the mentor who had gathered facts about Lennard. The soothsayer in sonorous monotone sent forth his mystic message.

"Ah sees a man. Tall man, long whiskers. Out o' one eye he don't see so well. Dere's rain a-coming down.

Dat man he can't do work on de crops to plant seeds. De rain comes down too hard."

Sandy was watching faces in the crowd and noted that men were impressed even by this recital of facts about the day when Lennard disappeared. Any stranger in town could easily secure such facts, but the declaration of them seemed like divination, stated as they were with this stage setting.

A bystander close to Sandy whispered:

"He's right. 'Twas raining hard that day and Jerry could take time off his crops to go into the woods."

The seer continued:

"Wid ax on his shoulder, wid brown overalls, wid rubber cape on his back, dat man he done go into de woods. He tramp here, he tramp dere. He knock his ax on crook trees. Sometimes he knock slivers off'm crook trees."

A man just beyond Sandy mumbled:

"That's Jerry. Every slack time he was off into the woods to hunt for ship knees. Putting his private blaze on 'em."

Now the oracle uttered the gist of some shrewd guesswork done by Sandy on the basis of what might be expected to happen in the case of a one-eyed man cruising through the nooks and crannies of the forest on a day when a rainstorm was making footing slippery.

"Ah sees dat man go down into gullies and up onto little hills. Ebery now and den his feet dey slip. Rain comes down hard. Every little while he walk on a log, one place and anodder, to keep his feet outta water. Bad doings for old man who don't see so well outa one eye. He fall off'm logs. Den he try to cross over gully on de log what has fell across—old log wid slippery bark. He done tumble off'm dat log. He cut hisself bad gash wid ax. And he don't come outa dat hole. In de woods—off dere," declared the voodoo

man, sweeping his arms in a wide gesture, "he's waiting fo' to be took out fo' his fun'ral!"

Watts opened his eyes, swept a glance across the upturned countenances and strode back into the hotel.

"Well, I'm going to say," declared a man in ringing tones, manifestly expressing the opinion of many bystanders, "as how that's the most sensible explanation of what happened to Jerry Lennard that has been put out to date—and I ain't the kind to cotton too much to a he-witch, either."

His statement was indorsed by many voices.

Deputy Sheriff Dollin ran up onto the porch and from that rostrum made a statement of his own.

"Feller citizens, I'm going to start a hunt for the body just as soon's it's light enough to-morrow morning. All men taking part in same will be sworn in by me as deputies in a special posse. We'll be lining along the border, every man in

sight of another. We're going to sweep the woods. The game season is open now. We'll be routing up partridges and maybe something bigger in the way of game. Everybody bring a rifle or a shotgun. What say?"

The vocal vote was unanimous. Giving the shouts of agreement, men nudged each other.

"And I want it understood and agreed that everybody is to keep out of the woods till the word is given to-morrow morning," the officer went on. "That way we'll give ourselves a square deal as friends and neighbors."

That plan was heartily indorsed also.

"Spread the news to all you meet in the back districts," urged Dollin. "We'll be needing two hundred men and I'll be disappointed as blazes if that number ain't on hand."

The listeners pledged coöperation, and the gathering dissolved into scattering knots of volunteers who strolled about, canvassing the possibilities.

To be concluded next week.



THE SCIENTIFIC MIND

FATHER JOSEPH J. AYD of Baltimore, published an article in a newspaper pointedly intimating that some of our scientists take too much for granted when they recreate aboriginal man or the missing link from a few bones found in Java in an area forty-six feet wide.

"Ah!" said John Barker, realtor and wit of the town, tossing the paper aside. "Father Ayd forgets the flawlessness of these scientists' logic, induction and argument! He forgets that the far, dim past is their oyster and that they can open it and find in it anything, from a pterodactyl singing a Greek chorus, to a stegodon learning its knitting in the shade of a banyan tree.

"Those fellows can, without the aid of field glasses or parlor magic, magnify an eyelash into a prehistoric pygmy and from a petrified knuckle figure the chest expansion of a great-uncle of the Cyclops. They can take a diprotodon's rib, dug up in Africa, and picture the entire fauna of the jungle before the flood. From a dinosaur's egg, uncovered amid the burning sands of Asia, they fill the Gobi Desert with reptiles that cleared the Himalayas at a single leap four million years ago. And a hoofprint in Alaskan rock enables them to trot out, saddle and bridle, and lay a bet on the ancient sea horse that steeplechased the mountainous waves of the stormy Pacific at a pace that makes Billy Barton look like a selling plater left at the post!"

She Looked *like* Lois

By

Robert J. Pearsall

Author of "The Crystal Intrigue," "Luck's Fool," Etc.

To a certain very chivalrous young miner every girl in need of help looked like his girl back East. He met one about whom he completely changed his mind two times.

YES, that was what was the matter with him—said my friend the *very* old-timer—every woman looked like Lois to him, particularly if she was in trouble. And as Lois hadn't any faults at all, because she was going to marry him, every other woman had wings and halos, too, and must be treated accordingly. Women being nearly as scarce as angels, out there in the gold fields, most of us went halfway with him; but all the same you get the reason for what we called him—"Chiv" being short for "Chivalry."

Now, as long as Chiv grubbed away on knife-blade stringers, and washing a pinch of dust to a dozen pans or so, no particular harm came to him from his delusion. Course, there were em-

barrassing circumstances—like him chasing "Dutch Pete" two days to make him come back to his wife, and discovering then that Pete was chasing his wife instead, she having run away with a gambler. And other cases like that. But what Chiv always rightly said was that the women had their reasons.

Then come the time he made his big strike. Well, he got out of California so fast that nothing had time to happen. Lois was waiting for him, you see, so he took off, cross country, from Downieville, with thirty thousand in dust and nuggets in a pack behind his saddle.

There were twenty other good men in Chiv's party—three of them with their wives along—so they felt pretty

safe, though that year there was a regular bandit organization operating clear through to Laramie. Full of dodges, that bandit gang was, with "Heady" Billings as leader, and looking for just such packs as Chiv carried—but not for the kind of scrimmage that Chiv's bunch would put up.

So they got through to Salt Lake O. K., and rested there a couple of days in the Mormon's "Promised Land," where some of them maybe talked injudicious. Then on through the desert to the dobe stockade that Jim Bridger had built in the southwest corner of Wyoming, and which the Mormons had now, having sent Jim into exile with his friends the Utes. But it was still called Fort Bridger—and is yet, for that matter.

It was in a sort of oasis, and looked mighty fine after the dust and sagebrush. So the party made camp where the Mormon guard sent them, a little to the south of the fort. They were the only ones there, except for the guard. But along toward evening a Mormon caravan came trailing out of the pass in the hills to the east. A big caravan, it was, about two hundred white-hooded wagons in line, with herds of cattle and companies of men walking alongside—like a whole city on the march.

Up and down over the hills and hollows it came like an enormous dragon, and headed into the north of the fort. Then somebody gave a command, and the first wagon swerved off to the right, the second to the left, and so on. The two lines curved away from each other for maybe a thousand yards, then they curved in again; and just as the last two wagons parted company, the first two met, so they were all in a circle, with the tongue of each wagon sticking under the wagon in front of it. They had a fort and corral, you see—let the Indians try stampeding if they wanted to! Everything else was done in the same careful, quick way, which accounts

for the fact they had energy left for the dance that night.

For, of course, there was a dance. Jephthah's daughter danced, and David before the Ark; so wise old Brigham saw to it that his people danced on their way to Zion.

They put tallow dips around the walls of the stockade, laid two boards across barrels for their orchestra—fifer, fiddler and drummer—and pretty soon "Pop Goes the Weasel" was sounding out on the desert air. The Mormon boys and girls trooped in, and the older folks, too.

The caller began to bawl:

'Alamen left for old Mrs. Finegan,
That is the way for to do it ag'in—ag'in."

Well, Chiv naturally attended, there being no bar against gentiles; and pretty soon he was feeling nearer to home than he'd ever felt in California. For of course there were plenty of women there—Scotch, Welsh and English converts, besides those from Eastern States—and it reminded him of hometown dances, and, naturally, of Lois. But he didn't see anybody that *looked* like Lois particularly, till his eyes lit on one that he could see plain enough was in some kind of trouble. Then he'd have seen a close resemblance, if she'd been cross-eyed and knock-kneed and weighed two hundred pounds. Don't ask me why. 'Twas just a tender-hearted way he had.

This girl was pretty, though, and fresher and neater looking than anybody else in the stockade. But she had a scared, worried look, and every time he glanced at her, it seemed by accident her eyes were just flickering to his. Maybe he would have thought it was something else than accident, if they hadn't been such timid, frightened eyes. As it was, he just naturally drifted her way, and pretty soon was dancing with her.

She could sure dance—plenty of

springiness in her, though most of his partners had seemed pretty tired. But all he could think of was the plain distress in her eyes. So he introduced himself, as a start to getting acquainted enough to find out what was the matter.

"Rose Paxton's my name," she said.

"A pretty name. You a Mormon?"

"Y-yes! My father is." Her voice kind of trembled.

Chiv knew he'd struck a pay lead the first shot, and he went on to ask:

"Any of the rest of your family along?"

"No. That's all there are of us." Her voice grew more and more shaky. "Just me and daddy. And daddy, he ——" Chiv thought she was going to break down and cry. "Daddy isn't with me now, either."

That was enough for Chiv. Plain enough, Fate had picked him for another rescuing act. He led her out to where there wasn't any light but that of the wondering prairie stars.

"Miss Paxton," Chiv says after a bit, "you sure are worrying about something." And then he went on to tell her about how much she looked like his girl Lois, and all. "If I could help you, Miss Paxton, I'd sure admire to do it, like I'd want anybody to help her."

At that, Rose did break out crying. Chiv hadn't a thought but that they were genuine, honest-to-goodness tears and as a matter of fact, they were. You may believe that about the girl, though you don't have to believe the story she was telling Chiv the next minute.

It went back to Illinois and to her father's conversion to Mormonism, which she said most emphatically that she "hated, hated, hated!"

"But when they got him to sell our farm and turn in his money to the church and start out here, I just had to come along with him. And everything went all right, till just before we got to Laramie, when he took sick. He took so sick that he had to stay there, but I

had to come along. Elder Chissum—he's in charge of everything—he said I'd have to. If I didn't, they wouldn't leave money there to pay for daddy's care."

"Well, that ain't very bad." Chiv was almost disappointed it wasn't. "When he gets well, he'll come along to Salt Lake City, and you'll be together again."

"Yes, but by that time I'll be m-married. I'm s-sealed already to Elder Chissum. And I can't—oh, I just c-can't m-marry him!"

"But, great snakes, they can't make you!"

"Oh, you don't know. They can. They do. He's the *elder*, I tell you. He's sealed me to him already. We're m-married already, f-for heaven. And when we get to Salt Lake City we'll be married for earth. I won't be. But I can't get away. I can't even *try* to get away. They let me drive the wagon, but they'd miss it in a minute, if it left the line. But if I could get to daddy, I think he'd see they're not as good as he thinks, and come back East with me."

Now, that was more interesting like, and Chiv pressed the girl's hand reassuringly, feeling more and more like he was talking to Lois. Too soft and smooth her hand was ever to have handled an ox-goad; but Chiv didn't notice that.

"Of course, you can't get away by yourself. Besides, how could you go traipsing back over the prairie, alone. But pshaw! you don't have to. Just you wait till morning and then tag along with my bunch. Three of the men have their wives with them, so you won't be alone. And you can ride one of our pack ponies—we've plenty of them. Lord, that's too easy," said Chiv, and meant it.

But the girl laughed kind of sadly.

"That's nice of you—Chiv. But I couldn't get away in the morning at all.

Nobody can get away. They always check up to see that nobody's missing."

"Well, you just walk over to our camp, and I guess they won't haul you back."

"But they would, they would! You don't know them, Chiv. I w-won't have anybody killed over me."

"Pshaw! They wouldn't fight."

"Wouldn't they! Wouldn't they, though!"

Come to think of it, Chiv decided that they probably would. Even in California he'd heard something of Mormon fighting. And they hadn't any reason to be gentle with the gentiles, because the Mormons had certainly been treated rough by them—take that Nauvoo affair, for instance. But there must be a way to help the girl—and when he started trying to figure one out, she helped him by whispering, thoughtful-like:

"Of course, just *now* I'm not watched, because they know our wagon's locked in line."

And naturally, Chiv saw the one way out—that is, if she'd only trust him. And to make sure she would, he began telling some more about how much he thought of Lois back home, and he got so plumb eloquent that it seemed like her hand took to trembling in his.

"And all this time I'm thinking: What if Lois was in your fix, and how'd I like another man to behave to her? And I'll engage to keep on thinking that, if you'll do what I say."

"What's that?" quavered Rose, and he could feel her shiver.

"Why, we'll just slip off right now, you and me, and keep on slipping till my bunch catches up with us in the morning. That way, nobody'll notice us. If my bunch all broke camp to-night, the Mormons would pretty nearly know you were with us. But in the morning, when my bunch do start, it'll be dead plain you're not with them, and I'll not be missed. Course, the Mormons may

get suspicious later and follow, but they can only catch us on horseback, and I notice they haven't many horses. I guess we can handle all the men they can mount."

"That's lovely of you, Chiv. But what then?"

"Why, anything you want. We're bound through Laramie, of course, and you can stop there or you and your father can come East with us, if he's well enough. What do you say? All right?"

Well, of course the girl agreed, and they started over toward Chiv's camp. But in spite of the fact that it was just what she'd been playing for, the girl had lost a lot of her springiness now, and her feet sort of dragged. That was quite natural though, Chiv thought, running away with a stranger and all. He took her up to the two men acting as camp guard, and told them her story briefly, and what he was going to do. They were real polite about it, but after Chiv and the girl had walked a little away from them, one of them called Chiv back.

"Better look out, kid, 'cause we're getting back toward civilization now—this ain't California. Sure the lady ain't stringing you?"

"Sure; she couldn't. Why, she's just like—— I might be talking to—you know who."

"Yeah, I know, she looks like Lois; but you look out—that's what I say."

There was a little more talk, but it didn't affect Chiv any; he joined the girl and took her over to his horse and put on saddle and bridle. Behind the saddle he fastened the pack of gold, which was secured by a leather belly strap. And all the time he went on talking, just so the girl would know him and have more confidence.

"I've got a pack pony for the grub and blankets, and the bunch'll bring it along. But this here stuff"—he patted the pack—"I don't trust with anybdy

but Jason here and me. You don't know all that's sewed up in this here buckskin. A marriage license for Lois and me, and a house and farm and furniture, and stock and machinery, and a whole lot else for us. And for mother and dad, a relinquishment on a two-thousand-dollar mortgage that they put on the farm the year I was born. It's been squeezing them ever since—just paying the interest. Figure all that in this one pack! Looked at in another way, this pack holds two years' most darn hard work, sometimes without enough to eat and sometimes with nothing at all. What's the matter, Rose—ain't crying?"

"N-no! It's just because I'm so glad!"

"Oh! Well, we'll be starting. We'll walk, if you don't mind. Jason could carry us both, and the pack besides; but we won't impose on him. We're taking him away from his rest, as it is."

So they started out, swerving around to the south a bit, to pass the Mormon caravan at a safe distance. It was a fine, starlit night; and they could see the ragged outlines of the hills a few miles to the east. After they'd left the camp a little behind, Chiv came back to the wagon road, which led straight to the one pass in the hills. The girl still acted mighty nervous, lagging behind sometimes, and, again, taking a brace and getting ahead. Chiv noticed that sometimes her lips were parted in a frightened way, and sometimes they were clamped tight. But he laid it all to fear and uncertainty—she not knowing him and all—and tried to ease her mind with more conversation about himself and his home.

"Yes, Lois and I sure think a deal of each other—maybe as much as you and your daddy do. She didn't want me to go away; and dad and mother didn't, either. But I vowed we all had to get money someway. Looked like we was

all slipping behind—Louis' people and mine, too. Two rocky old farms right side by side—there wa'n't nothing to be made from either of them. But even Louis' folks can have something to work with now. I'm sure going to be proud and happy, walking in with this gold."

"You are?" said Rosa, kind of breathless.

"I sure expect to be."

"And if you—lost it?" asked Rose, with a catch in her voice.

"I ain't aiming to lose it. Course, I know there's bandits all along that are looking for just such a haul. But that bunch I'm with is a mighty fighting bunch. Howsoever, if I lost it, I s'pose I could do it all again, if I was lucky enough. I'm a plumb lucky man, Miss Paxton."

"Yes," said she, with a sort of hysterical half laugh, biting her lower lip. "You are."

Then—it was queer—but the girl seemed to go off on a different tack altogether. A hard and reckless tack. She laughed and talked so fast and about so many things that poor Chiv could hardly keep up with her. Part of the time she seemed almost to be laughing at him, mocking his trust in Lois, and in her, too, though she didn't say anything open. And then she'd get frivolous and just a little more flirtatious than she'd been. Chiv, after his two years in the gold diggings, where he'd forgot the little he might've known about women, decided she was more light-minded than he'd thought, and sure needed some one to look after her.

All the while they plugged on toward the pass. It was so lit up with stars and moonlight that they could see it plain, as they came up to it. It was like a thin slice cut out of the hills, straight down to the prairie level, but the bottom was so narrow and so choked with rocks that had tumbled down that it was plumb impassable. So the wagon road

climbed up from the prairie, along the left hand side of the pass. There was a sort of outcropping there, anyway, which the Mormons had widened by digging back and building out along the edge.

Well, here they were at last, mounting up this road, with the girl still rattling on. Chiv would have liked to ask her to be quiet, for it came to him what a wonderful place it was for an ambush. There were plenty of rocks jutting out from the cliff for men to hide behind, and it was light enough to give them a deadly aim. No chance for a get-away either, his horse not being mountain trained, and the road as narrow as it was. Then Chiv got to thinking—what if something would make the horse shy, and he'd go over the cliff? So he shifted away from the girl to the outside of the road, and walked along careful on the edge of the drop, with his hand close to the horse's bridle.

So that was the way they were walking when, just a little ahead, Chiv heard a sound that might have been the stirring of a jack rabbit or coyote or snake or a nesting bird—only it certainly wasn't. He couldn't have said how he knew that, but he was dead sure. It was the edging forward of a crouching man; that was what it was. And while a shiver ran over him from head to feet, he noticed something worse. The girl had raised her voice just the slightest bit. She'd heard the sound, too, and was trying to cover it up from him.

Quick as a flash he knew that her story was a lie, and that she'd led him into a trap—it was his gold they were after. For a second he forgot all his chivalry, and just boiled with rage. But he never changed his step, for there'd come to him a plan; and as he walked on steadily, he pulled out his knife and slashed the bellyband that held the pack of gold. And he'd no sooner done it than there came what he expected—

"Hands up!"

His hands went up, all right; but they grabbed the pack, and he himself went down. Straight over the precipice he threw himself; and, as he did so, bullets split the air where he'd been. Behind him, he heard the girl laugh wildly, and between her peals of laughter, cry out: "I've done it! I've done it! I've done it!" like she'd gone plain daft.

Down went Chiv and hit a rock, bounced off that and down again, slipping and sliding and rolling. Some of the rocks were dislodged, and they rolled down and dislodged still others, so pretty soon there was a regular avalanche following him. His leg caught and he heard it snap; but, so help me! it's the truth that he felt no pain, though the leg was broken between ankle and knee. The pack was on his mind; you see, and mad fury with the girl. And when he hit the bottom, he was still engaged with both. But everything else was hazy, and it was a minute or two before he could figure out how he was fixed.

He was lying in a mess of rock and rubble, covered from his waist down. He could shift his left leg, but his broken right, which was now hurting tremendous, he couldn't move at all. He still had his gun and his pack of gold, and above him, for about seventy-five feet, the surface of the slide was nearly as even as a floor. Beyond that, on a steep slant, there were all sorts of rocks and boulders, with three men picking their way down through the boulders toward him.

He pulled out his gun and drew a sight on one of the men, but saw it was a chancy shot in the night light. Anyway, he'd better wait till he got covered some himself. So he dragged his pack of gold around in front of him, propped it up on its edge with small rocks, and then flanked it with a pair of big ones, leaving loopholes between.

The three men saw what he was doing, and all began to throw shots his

way; but he was pretty well covered by them, and none of them took effect. They kept coming on, but Chiv held his fire till they got out on the smooth surface of the slide. Then he drew a steady bead through one of the loop-holes, and partly by good luck, hit one of them. The man stumbled and began to cuss; then they all three crawled back mighty quick into the shelter of a boulder. With them quiet, the night was still as a graveyard, and Chiv could hear some of their talk, as they debated how to get at him.

"Can't take any more chances like that. What's the matter with one of us crossing the gulch and coming on him from behind?"

"I think I've got a better way than that—that is, if he's stuck there."

"D'you suppose he is?"

"Well, he hasn't shifted an inch either way, since he stopped tumbling. 'Pears to me if he wasn't stuck tight, he'd be moving. And if he is stuck tight—look here!"

The man lowered his voice, and Chiv couldn't hear any more of their talk; but, by gravy! he could pretty well imagine the rest of it. It was plain what they'd do, if they weren't fools; and that game with the girl proved they weren't. If he was to have a chance at all, he had to get out from under that rock and rubble.

Desperately he twisted around, and began trying to uncover his legs. He got some of the top rocks off, but underneath was one that he couldn't shift at all. He couldn't get a proper hold, you see, doubled around like he was. He gave up at last and faced back toward the men, thinking he might get another shot at one of them. Instead, he couldn't see them at all, but he could see plain enough that they were doing what he expected.

Above Chiv, right at the top of the slide, there was a magnificent big boulder. Chiv's eyes grew mighty big as he

looked at it, for it was turning over. Very slowly it was turning, with the men straining behind it—Chiv could hear them grunt and gasp—and straight as an arrow was the path Chiv saw it would take, down the slide and upon him!

Over it rolled, with Chiv watching it in horror; but just as he thought it was coming, sure, it stopped. It stopped, hung for a moment and then settled back. Again the men tried it, going at it with a run. It rolled a little farther this time, but settled back again.

Chiv began to breath again, for he saw they couldn't quite make it. Then he saw something that struck him as more terrible even than the tottering rock—the girl was climbing and sliding down from the road toward the men.

She was coming down to help them, of course, like she'd helped them before—there wasn't anything else to think. Chiv had had a sample of what she was capable of, all right. He hadn't any doubt about it; and the worst of it was that her strength added to that of the men would almost certainly turn the trick. The men had come close enough to doing it by themselves!

But another thing was plain, too: Chiv could stop her. The men had sort of kept down, but she was stepping down the rocks as bold as if they were the Golden Stairs. It was funny she didn't realize what an easy target she was. By heck! she'd know it in a minute, thought Chiv, leveling his revolver at her and squeezing back the trigger. And while he did it, he just turned his thoughts to how she had betrayed him, and worked his rage up against her the best he could; for he knew he was going to need it, if he was to shoot.

She kept coming down the precipice, now on her feet, now on hands and knees, now flattened against the rocks, still she was within twenty feet of the toppling boulder, which the men were

straining at again. All the time Chiv kept his revolver on her, and every instant he decided to shoot the next. To save his own life he'd do it; and for the sake of justice and Lois' sake, too; and to satisfy the deadliest rage he'd ever felt in his life against a living thing. He cursed and groaned and the perspiration stood out on his forehead from the effort he was making. One ounce more pressure on the trigger, and the thing was done. But a picture kept coming between them, kept substituting itself for the girl, like it had substituted for every unfortunate woman he'd known the last two years. At last he pulled his gun back. He was beaten and he knew it.

"Gosh!" he moaned, with a mighty bitter grin. "She's still looking like Lois."

Then he saw that maybe the girl was going to take care of her own finish. She'd climbed over sidewise a little, with the men not seeming to notice her. Then she stooped and tugged at a rock. What was in her mind Chiv couldn't think, but he saw that back of her, reaching pretty near up to the road, was a sort of arrested slide of rock—broad at the top and narrowing to a point where she was. Chiv couldn't see distinctly at all, but the slide seemed to have come down a sort of shallow gully, and to have jammed at the point where she was.

If she meddled with it, she mightn't have to be shot, and that's what she was doing. She pulled and hauled, and then Chiv saw her pick up a good-sized rock and heave it over her head. She flung it down at the point of the slide, like a lumberjack might aim a blow at the key log in a river jam. It crashed down on another rock, and the noise probably called the men's attention to her, for one of them yelled back.

"Hey, you! What you doing?"

The question had a scared note in it, for that smashing blow had broken

the jam, and the slide began to move—slowly at first, but gaining speed almost like a waterfall, for the drop was steep. The girl was running in front of it, right toward the men. They were swearing at her ferociously, and maybe threatening her with their revolvers, for she cried down to them.

"Don't you see? Don't you see I'm helping you? This'll shove the boulder over."

And Chiv's heart sank; because for a moment he'd imagined something else. He'd imagined she was trying to help him. Because whatever the slide did to the boulder, it would drive the men out from behind it. And the slide was going to hit the boulder a little side-wise; it was going to start it off, if it started it at all, with a shove to the left. That way it might not hit Chiv. It probably wouldn't. But the girl had intended to finish him, all right.

But what the dickens was she doing now? Running right past the boulder, past her cursing confederates, and around the boulder to the right. There she stopped, waiting, crouched a little in the shelter of the boulder—waiting to be crushed, it seemed. For the slide was roaring past the boulder now, and piling up against it. In a minute, the boulder would give way, and what would she do then? Also, what would the men do, with the slide crushing them against the boulder?

There was only one thing they could do, and Chiv waited for it. He waited mighty grimly, steadying and settling his nerves, and placing fresh cartridges handy. And when they came out from behind the rock, his revolver began to talk for him. Now he took a rest over the sack of gold, steadying his hand, and fired that way.

You see, the men themselves couldn't shoot, not with any efficiency, what with the slide rolling under them and upon them, and tumbling them over every second or two. Chiv would have

had to be a darn poor shot not to get them before they reached the edge of the slide—and he wasn't, by any means. The trails were soon safe from those three bandits forevermore.

By that time the boulder was toppling again with the weight of the slide upon it, and it wasn't going to stop, either. Chiv let out a yell with more fear in it than he'd felt yet, for the girl was still in front of it. She was under the right hand edge of it, shoving and straining at it; and, hard as it was, Chiv had to believe that she was risking her life to save his. For it was plain she was trying to help the slide, to shove the boulder over to the left, out of the straight path it might take upon him. Her strength might help, might furnish just the needed additional poundage, but what if she didn't get out of the way in time? Chiv raved and pleaded, urging her to leave, but she never let on to hear him, and stayed there till the boulder heaved over. Then she sprang away. Her feet slipped as she hit the slide, and she missed death by an inch.

But now she was up and coming again, leaping and running and dodging big rocks, down the surface of the slide, which had already reached Chiv and was burying him deeper.

The boulder rolled past him—a close enough shave. The slide slackened as its front reached the bottom of the gulch, and settled to a new equilibrium.

Chiv must have gone out for a bit—for the next thing he knew, the girl was pawing at the rocks that were holding him, and trying to lift him out of them, and pouring out explanations all the time, though in a pretty disjointed manner.

"Oh, Chiv, I had to. I had to lie to you. They had my father. It wasn't

the Mormons. And they said they'd kill him if I didn't—didn't tell you the story they made up for me, and fetch you out to them. We're not Mormons. They cut us out from our party—we were going to California. And my father is sick—he can hardly move. And so—so—— Oh, Chiv, I had to."

Chiv had his eyes open by then, and was looking up into hers, which were all teary and soft and tender, and with something in them that he'd seen in just one other pair of eyes in all his life. He knew then that she really looked like Lois; but because it was so real and true, he didn't say a word—just started to help her with the rocks the best he could. And his voice was mighty gentle when he asked, after a while:

"Where's your daddy now?"

"Up there." She nodded up toward the road. "Hiding up there somewhere. They had him bound. I cut him loose, and then I came. I couldn't come any sooner."

"Well, if we bind up this leg of mine a bit, I guess we can climb up to him. S'pect he's worrying some. We can wait there for my bunch to come and take us back to Bridger."

And that about ended the matter, except that the next morning the Mormon guard went out and gathered in the three bandits, who weren't so dead but that they could contemplate barred sunlight for a long time to come. Rose and Chiv both stayed in Fort Bridger a while—Chiv for his leg to mend and Rose for her father to get well. But nothing important developed. Rose went West and Chiv went East; and the only thing worth noting further is that there was one instant in this story, one single look in Rose's eyes, that Lois never heard about.

Another Robert J. Pearsall story will appear soon.



Oil Upon The Waters



By
**Roy
Norton**

Author of "Salvage," "Mr. Catlin's Weakness," Etc.

Captain Drake was sorry that he ever let his chief engineer persuade him to burn oil. He was sorry, until, one night, he came upon distress in very troubled waters.

THE master-owner of the steam schooner *Malabart*, Captain Eli Drake, sometimes referred to by sailors as the "Old Hyena" and by his unlucky rivals as "The Opportunist," had been talked into an experiment. His one great weakness was his love for his ship; and at a time when his bank account bulged with a bulky haul of salvage money, he had been induced by his chief engineer, Forbes, into fitting half his boiler room with oil burners. And that experiment proved a contentious affair between Forbes, who was a crusty old veteran of engines and grease, and Captain Eli Drake. To begin with, the *Malabart* seemed doomed to catch cargoes that took her where oil was either unobtainable, or

sold at such high prices that it proved uneconomical.

"It ain't my fault that you always jamb her nose east of Suez and then down a coast where oil's high priced, is it?" Forbes would growl.

"It's your fault I went in for another damned newfangled notion!" Drake would retort, shaking his fist at nothing, or pointing a stubby, practical finger at a bill. "First time we dry-dock, I'll have that whole mess ripped out and junked!"

Then Forbes would go into figures of money saved on stokers, Drake would point out that stokers and coal could always be had, and the argument invariably ended with Forbes and Drake separating, mumbling glumly,

one heading for the engine room, the other for the bridge, each telling his subordinate that one or the other had no sense when it "came to figgers."

The Old Hyena, who was always stubborn, inevitably became more so when disputed, and it is quite probable that the *Malabart* would have gone back to coal alone but for what Mr. Bill Catlin, the first mate, who was religiously inclined, long afterward would say was "a act of Providence." Mr. Catlin, who could pray, swear, or fight, with equal fervor, always esteemed it an act of the Deity rather than of man that the *Malabart* tried the oil experiment.

But for a time the subject of oil burning was such a sore one aboard the *Malabart* that it threatened to become a breach in the stanch friendships of a "happy ship," whose crew, through long companionship and many vicissitudes, had become so like a family that it was a joke of the seas that "If you run foul of one man off the *Malabart*, you'll have to fight the whole damn outfit, the Old Hyena included." And the Old Hyena, despite his years, bore a fearsome reputation. Nothing save death seemed strong enough to defeat him, and for nearly sixty years he had skillfully, adeptly, daringly, evaded that universal, unconquerable master. "My ship! My crew! My oceans!" These were his code, his religion, his life.

And so one day as the *Malabart* cleared from Capetown with a poor cargo for Rio, Captain Eli Drake, grizzled and saturnine, sneered at Forbes, white-haired and obstinate.

"We'll see whether those spare boilers of yours can pay for themselves, and the room they take. We'll burn oil to Rio, because oil here is average price. I've got a cargo of tinned mutton from the Falklands to bring back to Plymouth. We come back on coal. Oil's average price at Buenos Aires, and we'll take on some there. We dry-

dock for an overhaul at Liverpool. If you don't show me by then that oil is best—— Junk!"

"Then why the devil take on oil at Buenos!" old Forbes retorted.

"Because it can be sold for enough in Liverpool to pay a small profit, if it isn't used," Drake snarled, as he walked away with the peculiar and warning shift of his broad shoulders that foretold the futility and danger of further argument. So from Capetown to Rio the *Malabart* burned oil, made her average time, and was carefully and sedulously checked by Forbes. And in time the *Malabart* filled her fuel tanks at Buenos, dropped down to the Falklands, took on her cargo of tinned mutton, and started the long slant toward those little isles to which, for so many centuries, little things and big events have seemed to gravitate.

"The chief'll find out that he can't make good on his engine-room accounts," Captain Eli chuckled to Catlin, when they were some days out and the ship was running into a heavy cross sea that made her twist and squirm.

"The Old Man'll see what coal costs if this sort of thing carries on all the way across the line," the chief remarked to Catlin, when they happened to be alone. "Good thing I took on some extra stokers in Buenos—what with them bein' knocked about like jumpin' jacks in this sea."

And Catlin, who refused to avow a partisanship, said, "U-huh!" and meditatively smoked and stared at the dull, unbroken clouds that canopied the whole of the heavens in a uniform gloom.

The glass seemed as sluggish and unreasonable as the skies, falling a point or two, slowly rising and promising a change, then dropping back until it gave cause for gloomy forebodings. The ship seemed to be encountering everything from fogs like blankets to rain that at times flattened the waves

into long swells, only to cease and give them play again. The winds themselves seemed variable, drawing around to all points of the compass each twenty-four hours, or dying down to nothing, and the whole ship took on a sodden, gloomy, speechless air of doggedness, as if she had bent her nose to an interminable task. Day after day she slugged along.

And then, on a single night, within a few hours, or rather within an hour, not only her listlessness but that of those aboard her was dissipated as if by a trumpet call to action. The call came just after the seventh bell of the first watch had ceased, echoless and dead. Catlin, on the bridge, was staring absently around at a heavily running sea, when his eyes stopped roving, fixed themselves at a point on the eastern rim of the night. After a moment he took the night glass from its sling, steadied himself against the chart house, and stared still more earnestly.

"That looks to me like a fire over there on the starboard quarter," he remarked to the man at the wheel, who swung himself sidewise to escape the compass light and in his turn stared, frowning.

"It certainly does, sir," the man said, at last. "No mistake about it."

Catlin went to the wing of the bridge and called down: "On deck there! Go and find Captain Drake and tell him the bridge thinks it sees a strange fire off the quarter bow."

Within five minutes Drake came hastily up the bridge stairs, in his turn peered, and in his turn studied the glow through the night glass.

"Shift your helm there, Mr. Catlin," he called without removing the glass, "and bear down on that light. It's a fire, or I'm a Dutchman. Wonder what it can be!"

In a strange silence they stood and studied their new mark; for if there is any one feature of the sea that sends

a chill down a sailor's spine, it is that unexpected and tragic beacon which almost invariably spells disaster to some of his fellows. The *Malabart* had been quartering into the sea, but now, as she responded to her helm and took the sea broadside on, she rolled so heavily that if she had been one of those ships on which Drake and Catlin had first gone to sea they might have feared she would "shake the sticks out of herself."

She eased off slightly when she took the opposite quarter, but still seemed like a horse rebelling against its bits. Drake stood for a moment appraising the strength of the waves, shook his head doggedly, and then reeled to the tube and called down to Forbes for more speed. An exclamation of astonishment was wafted back to his ears, so he added: "Looks to us as if there's something in a bad way over the edge. Fire."

"Heaven help 'em!" was all he heard, and the *Malabart's* stack began to throw out black billows of smoke that tore away on a level plane as the wind seized them. Forbes was "shaking her up." The second mate, Giles, who had himself commanded ships and was a sailor at sea and a drunkard ashore, came up to join them. The wind seized his cap and whirled it away with the smoke. He braced himself with his white hair blowing in the wind, and swayed to and fro with the ship's motion, scowling at the distant illumination. He took the glass Catlin politely handed him.

All those on the bridge were intent. The sea was warning them of its might, throwing the *Malabart* to and fro with no more exertion than if it had been a feather.

Forbes found time to come on deck, gain the rail, and cling to it while he stared ahead. He let go and ran below, with set jaws proclaiming a determination to fight. The smoke from

the *Malabart's* stack again increased in volume. The noise of a roaring voice joined the squeak and shrill of shovels, of machinery urged to its utmost, of engines being alternately driven and nursed—the chief himself clinging and swinging to the steam valve, leaping her off when she slipped in the sea, driving her on when she caught.

At two bells, in the middle watch, the *Malabart* saw a huge halo of light; at three bells the point of a blaze; at four bells a sheet of flame, and at five bells a roaring, tearing mass of smoke and fire. Quivering, steaming from having been forced to sixteen knots as against her average ten or twelve, the *Malabart* bore down into the light of that tragic beacon. She eased down, as if exhausted, panting, uncertain as to what she might do now. Practically every man of her crew, including the steward—all save one or two men in the engine room—were crowded for'ard. The Old Hyena stood on the bridge, his rugged face appearing set and white. Behind him were Catlin, blocky, immovable, and old Giles, clinging to the bridge rail and staring wide-eyed, his white hair swirling in the wind.

"Point to port," Drake called to the wheel, and Catlin noted a strange repression in the voice. "Bill, half speed," Drake said a moment later. In a single leap Catlin was at the tube to give the word to Forbes, who was by now standing by for orders.

Drake paused, poised a moment, and then abruptly sprang across and said, quietly, to the quartermaster: "Give her to me," and took the wheel, as if, in this emergency, he had dropped back forty years and would trust none other than himself to handle his ship. He swung the *Malabart* over and closed down to wind'ard, passed the burning ship, came round in a slow sweep and across to the lee side. Then he swore, as a wave of heat struck across the space like the blade of a red-hot sword.

There was no need for glasses now. There she burned, a big combination cargo and passenger packet, her bows down as if an attempt had been made to drown the fire for'ard, her whole fore body wreathed in smoke and flame, while abaft every soul aboard her who could seemed to have huddled to escape the heat. Amidships, men could be seen struggling with a boat, as if, up to the advent of the *Malabart*, such recourse had been deemed hopeless.

"They've tried to get other boats off and—davits awry—must have had bad luck with 'em," Catlin bawled at Drake. And the latter merely nodded. He stood by the wheel for a moment more, then brought the *Malabart* around until she was well astern and to wind'ard of the burning ship, just out of the live heat line. He handed the wheel over, saying:

"We'll try to hold here," and calling for slow speed. "Let her swing," he said to the quartermaster. "Hold her nose up. That's all—nothing more." And he joined Catlin, who had again picked up the glass.

"*Saltarno*, from Liverpool," Catlin said, as if reading a message. "Waltton's Anglo-South-American Line, ain't she, sir?"

Drake did not answer, but took the glass from Catlin's hands and scanned her. His lips moved, soundlessly, as if he was counting.

"I make it thirty-two," he said. Catlin heard and said, as if in response, "Yes, sir," Catlin said, "thirty-two, sir. And God help 'em!"

"Those other boats they tried to get off——" Drake muttered.

The three officers turned and stared at one another for a moment, with expressions which told of a mutual recognition of tragedy.

"If so be they got clear, sir," said Giles, shaking his head, "nothin' could live long in that——" He waved his hand toward the tumbling wrack of

twisted waves and surges that churned the *Malabart* up and down, ceaselessly.

"Damn it! That's certain!" Drake growled. "But what are those fools trying to do now? Look at 'em!" He pointed angrily to where, in the light of the fire, the men amidships of the *Saltarno* were desperately trying to lower away their boat. "Still—maybe it's so hot there they're ready to risk anything, now that we've hove alongside. Ah, there they go," he said, and the men aboard the *Malabart* stood breathless, watching a valiant attempt. They saw an ill-timed wave seize the boat, hurl it upward for a brief moment, despite the efforts of the two men in it to fend it off, and then smash it against the reeking hull as if it were of fragile matchwood—and that was all. The whole tragedy had passed with the rapidity of a hastened film.

"They might have waited a while to see——" Catlin began.

"Wait? It's hard to wait sometimes and—what'd be the use? The glass is falling, the sea is still making, their ship may not last an hour, and they must be almost crazy from the heat!" Drake seemed distraught with helplessness, took two or three uncertain steps, leaned over the port wing of the bridge and scanned the sea, walked across to the opposite wing, and shook both his fists in the air.

"Hello! Signaling, sir!" Catlin called. "It's the old army wigwag."

"Damn it! Why haven't we got an old army man aboard that knows that stuff!" Drake groaned.

"Excuse me, sir," the voice of the man at the wheel broke in, "one of those extra stokers below told me he had done four years in the signals in the army. One of——"

Drake was already at the tube and talking to Forbes. In a minute or so a blackened man with naked chest and arms came bounding up the bridge steps, carrying two towels that he had

evidently seized from some cabin. For once he was the man supreme; the officers made way for him and watched as he swung his two towels in wide, swift circles, then lowered them, and watched. On the burning ship they saw a man in rapid motion, and the fluttering of two pieces of white cloth.

The stoker made a single signal of understanding and turned to Drake.

"He says, sir, that unless something can be done soon it's all off, because they've got a lot of stuff—can't make out what, sir—that the fire's likely to reach at any time now, and when it does they blow up."

There was a moment's stupified horror, broken by Drake's roar.

"All right! Tell 'em I'm going to try." He turned to Catlin, and the latter saw that the hard, blocky, stern face of the Old Hyena was for once betraying emotion. "Bill," he said, "with that basket-rigged lifeboat, we can possibly get away. We've some sailors aboard this ship—men who know their business—old-school men, when sailors were sailors and not just steamboat hands. You know that."

Catlin mumbled something that the wind carried away, and nodded grimly.

"I'll want four men, Bill. Pick the unmarried ones."

"All right, sir. Of course, it'll have to be a volunteer job and——" Catlin paused, and his eyes swept for'ard to where the men were still huddled, excited, and in suspense. "I'm sure we can get the boat launched and clear, sir; but it'll be comin' back that'll take some doing. But I'll do my best, sir."

"Bill," Drake said quietly, "you're not going. I'm going to try to take that boat across myself. The ship's in your charge."

"But, sir——"

"And see here, Bill; if I don't come back, she's yours. You'll find a paper in my desk that—— Get me the men, Bill, and have the boat cleared away.

I'm going to get on some other duds. Look lively!"

"Why, the Old Man's gone daffy! No boat can live in that. If it gets clear—which is ten to one it won't—it can't get back or put any one aboard!" Giles, competent man of the sea that he was, raved and swore, as Drake disappeared; and Catlin stood still, as if for the moment stricken helpless by an unkind Providence.

Then Bill Catlin suddenly leaned closer to Giles and spoke rapidly for a moment, ending with, "You've got the bridge, Giles. I've got to go below and get those men. I think Gates and 'Tarpaulin' Jones and——" His last words came over his shoulder as he ran down the steps, once more the man of action.

The *Malabart's* lifeboat swung on the side of the ship opposite the burning steamer. The darkness about it seemed intensified by the contrast; and with their backs to the light, the men worked in gloom. They moved like strange shapes illuminated on one side, formless on the other, as they fell to and swung the boat outward, clinging to its heavily woven basket fenders, holding it from swaying by sheer numbers and willingness of hands. They worked silently, as if subdued by the tragic tensivity of the undertaking. Three men stood by the rail, half stripped, waiting to spring aboard—men who knew the chances against them, and were daring their lives in a hard venture.

Drake came hurriedly into the group, and called:

"Catlin, it's up to you to maneuver the ship as best as you can to help us—if we come back, you understand?"

"Aye, aye, sir!" Catlin said. He heard the voice of Forbes, who had taken a momentary run from the engine room, asking hurried questions.

"Giles could do it as well as I could," Catlin growled, as if rebellious at being left behind in an hour of peril.

Then Drake sprang upward, poised for a moment, leaped with the roll of the ship, and scrambled to the lifeboat's stern. Almost instantly four other forms leaped, seized oars.

Drake's voice ordered:

"Lower away smartly there, and let go with a run on the first big crest."

The boatswain's voice answered, "Aye, aye, sir!" For an instant there was a waiting pause; then, with a splash, the boat took the water. Once it came smashing back, threatening to break itself. Twice it struggled, as if loath to leave the ship, and then, driven by four desperate oars in skilled, hard, hands backed by seasoned brawn, it cleared, and the crew of the *Malabart* broke into a mad cheer as the first danger had been overcome. The boat pulled around the black side of the *Malabart* into the almost blinding light of the *Salturmo*.

Drake, at the tiller, found time to glance at his men and encourage them with a "Well done, men. Well done." Then he stopped, and cried: "Catlin! What the hell are you doing here? After I told you——"

"What do you think I care about the ship without you!" Catlin bawled back. "We been together so long, Eli, that I thought we might as well see the finish together. Giles can handle that ship as well as I can."

His voice came jerkily, broken by his herculean efforts with the oars. His great, dogged head was alternately bent down between his huge shoulders, and thrown back, exposing the pillar of his neck. The dancing light seemed to flicker over his graying head and stern eyes.

"Bill—Bill——" Drake tried to speak his feelings; then, to cover his lapse, broke into a string of profanity in which he cursed Catlin for not obeying orders, and then cursed the sea. But he might have been addressing the winds for all the heed that was given

him; for the four rowers, sailors all, were intent on force and regularity of stroke—had no breath for words, as they were thrown up and down from, the tops of high, watery mountains into the depths of equally awesome valleys. They may have heard, but did not heed, the cheers and shouts of the pitiful group on the after deck of the burning hell, as they swept toward it and felt the first great wave of blistering heat. They felt it hotter on their backs as they drove the lifeboat as close as they dared under the stern counter of the doomed vessel.

A line whipped over them; and they took a few strokes to shift clear of the wreck. Drake made the rope fast. And they heard him exclaim: "They've got a *man* up there!" Catlin looked up to see a man striking right and left to drive back some of the panic stricken who had lost their senses in that place of torture. There were confused shouts, bawled orders and suggestions from Drake, responses. Drake's voice more quietly:

"Steady, men! Steady! They're lowering a woman!"

The weighted line dragged them toward the ship, and then it slackened away, as a huge wave caught them. There came a splash, a scream, shouts from Drake; and the woman was hauled aboard, almost strangling. Drake again called:

"Give way a little. Another one——"

A second woman was landed, and from her arms came the shrill cries of a frightened child.

Others were lowered steadily. One man leaped from the deck, was swirled past the reaching hands, and went out into the darkness with a gurgling shout of despair. The tragedy seemed to quell the surge above; but the nightmare of anxiety continued. To Catlin, intent upon his oars and calling orders to the others when Drake gave his attention to a rescue, the time seemed hours, in-

terminable, filled with dangers and escapes.

"All we can take," he heard Drake shout. And then: "Give way, men! Give way!"

Catlin was but half aware that the boat was heavy; that it was crowded to the edge of risk; that now and then a wave broke over them; that it seemed impossible to reach the *Malabart*, much less get their passengers to safety on her decks. Drake was alternating his shouts of encouragement with great oaths of approval, innocently uttered and doubtless unreckoned against him by the Recording Angel. It seemed to those men laboring at the oars throwing every ounce of brawn and effort and skill into their task, that they made small headway in that desperate fight against a running, malicious and angry sea. The heat of the burning ship had not been cleared, could not be cleared. Suddenly they felt an inexplicable change in the water. The waves did not break so turbulently—seemed to run more regularly. Mystified, but encouraged, they rowed on. And looking ahead, Catlin saw a huge, purpled reflection on the surface of the waters. Its meaning came to him in a flash.

"Oil! Oil! Forbes is—— Good old Forbes! Maybe we'll make it!" he thought, unaware that in his stress he was shouting aloud.

"And Giles! What about Giles? He's brough, her down until she's so close she's blistering paint!" he heard Drake shout exultantly. "Bill—Bill—Giles is a sailor! A sailor!"

They sweltered into a smooth area, and scarcely observed the great floats of oil-soaked waste that were moored to the *Malabart's* lee side, or the gush of the pumps pulsing oil out upon the sea. There was no time, then, to think. There was a feeling of exultation when the passengers were all finally landed, the boat was again floating high and

they gathered their strength for the return battle.

Catlin lost count of the trips. He lost count of those that were drowned in trying to reach the lifeboat. He remembered that the work seemed never-ending; that when one boatload was ferried across, the same battle must be fought again; and that the last of all, the sailors of the *Salturmo*, not waiting time to take to the sling, came down the line, were sometimes submerged as it slackened away, came up swearing, offered to take the oars, and shouted their gratitude.

Catlin was bent over, panting, like a rower spent with the finish of an endurance race, heedless, uncaring, groggy, blistered, blind with exhaustion, when a voice, weary and hoarse, battered through to his consciousness:

"Bill, wake up! We've got one thing more to do—get aboard ourselves."

Drake's hand was on his spent shoulder. It was Drake's voice that was calling upon him for one more effort. He dropped his oar, stumbled to his feet, sagged. They were Drake's hands that bent a line about him, and Drake's cry, "Hoist away!" that seemed the last real thing he was to hear.

He came to his senses when he felt the solid oak deck beneath his feet. He stood, still panting and spent, and saw the other three rowers hauled up. Good for you, Tarpaulin," he whispered. And you, Gates." Then everything was a blur of confusion, with many shadows about him, a chorus of sounds, shouts, moans, laments. He fell to the deck and lifted himself, and strangled as he gulped at the stimulating drink of brandy that old Forbes was pushing between his lips.

"That noise—what's that—a siren?" Catlin asked.

"Big blubber of a liner that came up just when you were bringing over the next to the last load. She stood by;

but I notice she didn't try to put a boat over to help."

"Don't blame her," said Catlin, struggling to his feet. "No, I'm all right now. I'm for the bridge—Old Man gave me hell for going in the boat. That skipper off the *Salturmo* had most of his face burned off, and a lot of those poor devils got blisters on 'em. Must get up on the bridge."

"And me below," said Forbes.

Catlin crowded through the mob on deck and climbed the bridge stairs just in time to see, off the horizon, a single great flash of flame. A dull noise—and it was night again; a night with a trying sea, a crowded ship, and no stars.

A stolid figure, swaying, was near the man at the wheel. It turned and shouted down the tube:

"If you've got any of that damn oil left, you might burn it. Nobody'll ever thank us, or pay us for it—or feeding thirty-eight poor devils from here to port. And we've got a lot of blistered paint, and—— But steady on a minute! You were right, Forbes! Oil's the stuff!"

Catlin said nothing. He stood watching the place where there was no longer a glow.

But Captain Eli Drake, who had been wrong concerning the use of oil, was proven wrong again when, with crowded decks and food on half rations, they reached Plymouth, the *Malabart's* home port. He scowled and wondered what was up when a boat out near the end of the Batten breakwater recognized his ship and wasted pounds of steam through its screaming siren. Instantly others, as if in waiting, took up the welcome, until every craft in the Cattewater that had steam to blow a whistle added to the din. Up on the Hoe they saw a crowd gathering rapidly, a crowd that cheered and waved.

"Why—why they're making all this fuss about us, I do believe," he said. "Wonder how they——"

"That liner must have used its wireless, sir," Catlin said, staring down over the crowded deck, where some of those they had rescued seemed hysterical with joy. A port boat with its official flag flying came fussing out to board them; and three important-looking men came on deck. One of the rescued women screamed "Father!" and was embraced. Then the father, without asking consent, quite as if accustomed to invading bridges by right of ownership, climbed up and rushed across to the commander.

"You're Drake, aren't you? Captain Eli Drake? Well, I'm Walton of the A. S. A. Line. My daughter was one of those you took off the *Saltarno* and from what we've heard and what she's already told me, I want you."

Drake tried to release his hand, and looked puzzled, as if suspecting that this shipping magnate had gone slightly crazy through his paternal emotions, and was not mentally responsible.

"Want me, sir? Want me! I'm pretty busy now, and my ship isn't passed yet, and——"

"Damn your ship, sir. If she's yours, we'll buy her. I want you to take over a ship we've just launched. Finest and biggest in our line. That's my way of expressing my gratitude and——"

He stopped when he saw that the captain was slowly shaking his head. Then Drake, the Old Hyena, swung round and threw an arm out and pointed at the men of the crew, who were forward waiting for orders and grinning at the Hoe.

"You see them, sir? You see Bill Catlin, and old Giles here on the bridge? I'm mighty proud, sir, to have had your offer, but I couldn't part with 'em. They're all mine, now, on this, my little tramp ship, and it wouldn't be the same on your big liner. But——" He stopped as if distracted by a new thought, massaged his scalp under his cap with his thick fingers, and said: "If it strikes you as being all right, you might pay for a lot of oil my engineer, Forbes, as good and competent a man as ever took over a steam valve, had to pump into the sea."

The shipping magnate stared at him wide-eyed for a long moment, and then, reverting to the days when he too had known the roll of a deck, blurted:

"Pay—pay—your out-of-pockets—you old shellback? Of course I will! But, just the same—well, I'll be damned!"

And then Drake recovered, felt they understood each other, grinned happily, and was satisfied. Oil had won!

Another story by Roy Norton will appear in an early issue.



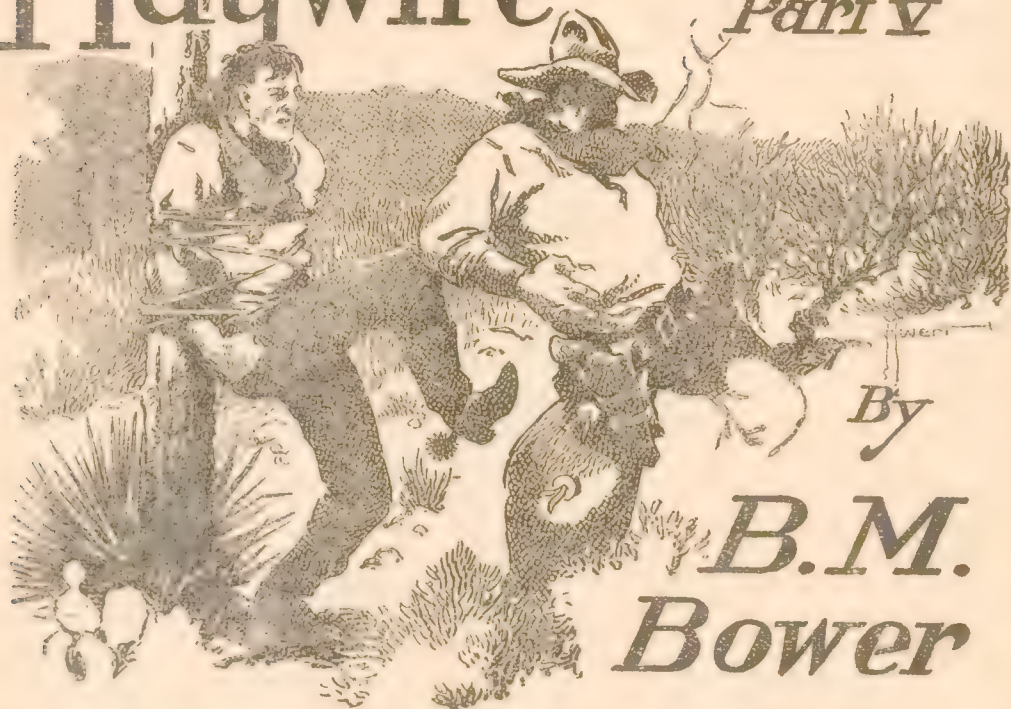
THE CAPITAL'S EARLY RISER

DOCTOR HERBERT PUTNAM, head of the Library of Congress, is the champion early bird of Washington. He goes to bed every evening at eight o'clock, gets up and dresses at two in the morning, and then does some work or takes a stroll through the deserted streets of the sleeping city.

In this he is a contrast to the late Doctor Alexander Graham Bell, inventor of the telephone, who also had his home in Washington. Doctor Bell used to work from ten o'clock at night until four in the morning and sleep until ten or eleven in the forenoon.

Haywire

In Five Parts
Part V



By

**B.M.
Bower**

Author of "You Get What You Give," "Points West," Etc.

The conclusion of a splendidly human Western story. Lynn's problems are worked out in an unexpected way, after a discovery is made concerning the school-teacher.

CHAPTER XX.

CUPID TAKES A HAND.

A SIX-HORSE team dragging along a road which converged two great loads of baled hay upon the Elk Basin road at the mouth of the coulee marking the beginning of the Hayward Ranch, pulled to a stand at the forks, while the driver climbed down and walked to the side of the leader farthest from the adjoining road. Standing so and fussing with the hames—though beyond shaking them now and then there was nothing he really did to them—he could watch the lone rider approach from Elk Basin way, and yet remain fairly well concealed from view.

Two or three minutes he stood so;

then as the rider came up to the fork in the trail, riding slowly and in evident doubt, Lynn left his ambush and walked boldly out in full sight. Almost instantly the rider drummed heels on the horse's ribs and came forward at a trot.

"Well, of all things! I certainly will believe from now on that prayers are answered and Providence has a real and vital interest in the lives of men!" The little school-teacher leaned and offered her gloved hand, which Lynn took in both of his.

"Providence is sure doing all right, far as I'm concerned," he replied with smiling earnestness, and let his long-lashed eyes make his meaning as plain as they liked. "Long time since I've seen you! How'd you know I'd be at

this point at this particular minute of this particular day? You a mind reader? If you are, I'll knock off work and start in going to school. How long would it take to teach me?"

"Longer than you have years to devote to the study," she told him, with just enough sharpness in her voice to check the wooing note he had let creep into his. "If you had any talent in that line at all you'd have saved me this long ride."

"I did want most awfully to come in and see you! But the fact is——"

"Oh, it wasn't that I wanted you to come and see me. How ridiculous men can be! But if you knew how important it was that I should see you, I think it would have been worth your while to make a trip to town."

"I did," said Lynn ruefully. "But you were in school and I was in a hurry and couldn't wait."

"You're always in a hurry these days, it seems to me," she retorted. "Are you going to let your horses stand there? If you are, I'll get off and sit in the shade of the wagon for a few minutes. There's something I'd like to tell you."

"There's a whole heap I'd like to tell you," Lynn hinted.

But since she gave him no attention, he did not follow it up, but led old Blaze around into the shade of the first load, yanked his coat off the hay, where it had been serving him as a cushion, and spread it on the ground for her. She sat down cross-legged and fanned her flushed face with her hat, while Lynn thought how sweet she looked with the loose tendrils of hair waving gently in the breeze she made. The worried look in her eyes puzzled him, but he would not spoil the picture by asking her why she had come. And in a minute she looked full at him, studying his face as she might that of a bad boy in school.

"You don't look a bit like a murderer," she said, so abruptly that Lynn started.

"That's nice," he countered dryly. "Did you expect me to?"

"No-o—but there are some who might try to argue that you did." She paused. "Was it you who shot Hank Miller?"

"No," Lynn regretfully denied, "Helge beat me to it. Why? Hank didn't die, did he?"

"He's back in town," she said soberly, "and I hear he's doing a good deal of talking. How she does it I can't imagine, but there isn't a whisper in that town that Mrs. Moore doesn't hear. I could give you the history of every man, woman and child in the county, I do believe—and most of it is derogatory. She regales me with all the gossip there is going, and while I don't usually pay much attention to what she says, there are times when I actually pump her to find out all I can. There's a lot of speculation," she added, "about your sudden prosperity."

"Because I've got a bunch of sheep?"

"That and your new air of—well, of prosperity, of being a man of affairs. You *are* changed, you know. It's difficult to explain in so many words, but I myself have noticed it. People just wondered, until Hank came back from Green River. Now he goes so far as to say he knows where you got your money."

"Well, maybe he does," Lynn conceded.

"He says it belonged to old Heinie. He—well, last night a lot of them were talking on the street, and I heard them. He called you a dirty killer and a thief, and he said you ought to be strung up by the heels and filled full of lead." Miss MacIvor shivered slightly as she repeated the ugly words, but her eyes were direct in their gaze.

"They're still harping on that old yarn about Heinie having money, are they?" Lynn forced himself to look straight into her eyes, though he felt the color rising in his cheeks.

"But Lynn, you said you saw him with money in his hands! They don't know anything about that, of course, but——"

"I didn't say he had enough in his hands to buy three thousand head of sheep, did I?" Lynn's smile was tinged with bitterness. "I told Rose——"

"Yes, I know what you told Rose. I understood at the time that it was some small amount the old man had, and of course I don't for a minute believe that you would be capable of robbing him—to say nothing of taking his life. But the mystery of the sheep every one knows you bought, and the supplies you have bought——"

"I'll tell you all about that," Lynn said quickly, relieved that the opportunity had come. "I borrowed five thousand in Green River. John Trueman holds a mortgage on the sheep. You might tell that to Mrs. Moore and let her go peddle it. You might say, too, that the bunch cost me thirty-five hundred, and I have a note to meet a year from now and another one two years from now—or from when I made the deal, to be exact. I didn't have hay enough to carry them through the winter, so I bought all I could afford from Murray, over west of here. That doesn't sound much as if I was using stolen money, does it?"

The words brought a frown between his eyes. Stolen money—it didn't sound pleasant in his ears, even though he knew he had done no wrong.

"You speak as if I had presumed to pry into your affairs," said Miss MacIvor in a hurt tone. "Do you expect me to gossip to Mrs. Moore about you? I'm very sorry if that is the opinion you have formed of me."

That, of course, took some explaining and apologizing, with further explanations from the little school-teacher. Finally, after some sparring and pretended misunderstandings, a good deal of discussion followed which concerned

no one save themselves. The surprising feature of their conversation is that before it was over their two heads drew very close together. Lynn kissed her lingeringly on the mouth, and after that there must be more explanations and discussion, naturally. So the sun hung low and very red in the sky, when at last he helped her on her horse and stood there with his arms clasped around her waist.

"I don't see how I'm going to let you go, little Jan," he said softly, gazing up into her flushed and smiling face. "It's going to be a long, hard pull before I reach the point where I'll dare ask you to share my—my fortunes." He laughed a little, a sense of almost guilty concealment surging over him. To tell her was a temptation almost too great to be borne. But his Scotch caution prevailed. It might be hard to make her understand his moral right to that money; he would have to prove himself, prove her, before he dared let her share his secret.

"But a long, hard pull is the best thing in the world for a man," she told him brightly. "And we have been so terribly sudden that I think we'd better take plenty of time to think it over."

"You mean you aren't sure you care?" Apprehension sharpened his voice.

"I mean we scarcely know each other. And I have my work, too, you know. I want to teach for at least a year—longer, maybe. We—we may be too impulsive, Lynn. We may not——"

"That first day, when I saw you in the store—I knew then I wanted you." Lynn's eyes held her breathless. "It looked pretty hopeless, though. But now I'll have something to work for. I—I know I can take care of you, all right. A year's too long, little school-ma'am! Some dark night I'll ride in and carry you off. I know a preacher who——"

"And you five thousand dollars in

debt!" She laughed tremulously as she half-heartedly attempted to pull his arms from their embrace. "No, we'll have to wait a long, long while, even if we do find that we really care. We can't start with a load of debt hanging over us, Lynn."

"We won't have to. I can pay that —" But there he stopped, biting his lip.

"With good luck—yes, of course. But we'd better wait until it's wiped out. And we *have* been very hasty! I never dreamed I'd let a man propose the fourth time I've met him. I——"

"The fifth," Lynn corrected her. "I ought to have done it long ago. I would, if I'd had the nerve."

"Lynn, you're perfectly incorrigible!" Then her face grew worried. "I must go, really. And you will be careful, won't you, dear? I don't know as their talk amounts to anything, but Hank Miller will stir up something if he possibly can. He's a snake. I do believe he killed that old man himself and is just trying to load the crime off on some one else."

"So do I, but that don't help to prove it, and it don't make it so. I guess maybe I hate him too much to be any judge. But you needn't worry, Jan. He may shoot off his mouth a lot, but when it comes to really doing anything—why, Hank isn't there. Not unless he could plug a man in the back."

"But it worries me to have every one talking and guessing and wondering whether you really did kill Heinie and take his money. The story is going around now that he had ten thousand dollars hidden away somewhere. It may be silly, but there are always people who are ready to swallow anything they hear."

Lynn laughed and pulled her close to him, laying his face against her slim neck.

"Why don't they make it a hundred thousand while they're about it?" he

dared to jeer. "I guess they'd hit the truth about as close. I love you, Jan. Tell me once more what you did a while ago."

"I love you," said the little school-teacher softly, her eyes shining into his. "But I won't, if you don't let me go this minute! Do you want me to be in the dark getting home?"

"No." Lynn stepped back, eyes clouded at the thought. "I wish I could go with you. But nobody'd hurt you—nobody'd dare! Hurry, won't you, sweetheart?"

"Yes," she said, and leaned and kissed him of her own accord, before she reined old Blaze into the trail and loped away, looking back every rod or so to wave her hand.

Lynn watched her out of sight, then climbed back on the load and unwound the lines from the high brake lever.

"Ninety-two thousand dollars, and now—this!" he breathed, as he started the six horses on the homeward trail. "I—I just can't realize it, somehow. To think—just to *think*—she cares!"

In that dazzled mood he arrived at the upper ranch with his hay, and the warning she had ridden out to give him passed completely from his mind.

CHAPTER XXI.

OLD JOEL SMELLS SHEEP.

I SMELL sheep! I smell *sheep* in this house!" Old Joel gripped the arms of his big chair, the upholstery of which was worn down to the warp with former angry grippings, and drew great breaths in through his nostrils.

"Why, Joel! What in the world ails you to-night? You don't any such a thing, smell sheep!" Fork in hand from turning elk steak in the frying pan, his wife hurried to the door and looked rebukingly in upon the old man. "How could a sheep get into the house, when there isn't one within forty miles of here, that I know of? That's the second

time you've raised a howl about smelling sheep. If it's got so you have to imagine things to keep you mad, I must say you've come to a sorry pass!" She turned back to the stove and stabbed peevishly at the sputtering red meat.

"I wish one of you boys would go bring in some dry wood," she said fretfully. "Seems to me you save all the sappy elder till it rains! Go on, now—dig under the pile and get me something dry, or else scratch around in the woodshed for some chips or something."

"*I smell sheep*, I tell yuh!" came bellying out from Joel's room, as the two boys bolted from the kitchen with their hands clapped over their mouths. Outside in the drizzle they slapped thighs in contortions of mirth.

"Oh, Lynn, wait a minute!" Sid called guardedly as Lynn in his yellow slicker and hat pulled down to his ears, went striding past them. "Hold on, I wanta tell yuh something!"

"What's eating yuh?" Lynn impatiently demanded.

"Paw smells shee-eeep!" Sid was fourteen and his trickily changing voice slid uncontrollably up into shrill falsetto.

"An'—an' Maw can't smell a thing to save her life, an' she thinks Pa's goin' crazy!" little Joe giggled, showing where two teeth were just beginning to grow into the gap in his broad smile.

"Rose almost laughed right out," Sid further embellished the tale; "only she dassen't, fer fear Mom'd get wise. Gosh, he'll smell sheep to beat the band when *you* get in there!"

"It's the wet weather," Lynn explained frowningly. "You sure Mom didn't smell it?"

"Course she never. She couldn't smell it when that skunk got in the woodshed, and I guess that's worse'n sheepy clothes."

"Well, you boys be mighty careful or you'll lose your jobs. You didn't say anything, did you?"

"No, we never," they said in duet. "We never said a word. You can ask Rose."

"Because if you so much as let one yeep outa you, the stuff's all off, far as you're concerned. It would worry Mom to death. And you know——"

"Aw, what d'yuh think we are! Mom wants some dry wood, Lynn, to fry the steak."

"Well, get into the house, both of you. I'll find something."

This was the new Lynn, who had somehow softened toward his world, including the boys he had not so long ago looked upon as plain pests and nothing more. They grabbed a few sticks from the bottom of the pile and scurried in out of the cold mist of a fall storm, leaving Lynn to attack the big pitch-pine log, which made hard chopping but could be counted on for a hot, resinous blaze, when Mom especially needed it.

Lynn pondered the problem of scent while he drove the ax into the log. He supposed they did smell a bit "sheepy," as Sid had expressed it, but he did not see how they could help that. They had been fussing with the sheep, dividing the band, in order to house them all in two sheds at the upper ranch, and the boys had taken delight in getting in among them and wrestling with some of the more stubborn ones, forcing them back inside in the little shed.

It had, of course, not been possible to hide from the boys or from Rose all knowledge of his venture into the sheep business, so Lynn had made Sid and little Joe accomplices in the undertaking, and was letting Helge teach them how to handle the band. Some day, as the flock increased, their services would be needed to help with the herding, and he was shrewd enough to start the training now.

So, when Helge brought the band in from the farther range to their winter pasture, and the storm made the mat-

ter of housing an immediate problem, Sid and Joe had been put on Lynn's pay roll to the tune of five dollars a month for running errands and helping Helge. Rose, of course, was taken into the secret and shared Lynn's worries and his pride as a good sister should.

But because of old Joel's eagle eyes and ears and his terrific bursts of rage, they had thought it wise not to let their mother know what was going on. In her presence, when it was necessary to speak of the activities at the upper ranch, they called the sheep "cattle," and their constant trips up there were explained as fence mending. It had all been simple enough, once the boys threw themselves into the spirit of the game; but now here came the problem of smell to torment Lynn.

In a vague, inattentive way he had been conscious of the fact that you cannot work around sheep without acquiring that peculiar, woolly odor which clings to the clothing and is like no other smell on earth. It had not been very noticeable before, though Helge reeked of it. Lynn doubted whether his mother's deadened olfactory nerves would not betray Helge's calling to her, if he ever came into her presence.

And now he was forced to recognize the fact that he and the boys were scented with the odor of the damp, woolly bodies. It might be a small matter, but it did not seem so to Lynn just then. He dreaded to enter the kitchen, but the hot, meaty odor of frying elk steak floated out to him to remind him how hungry he was. He lifted the pine splinters one by one into the crook of his arm and went in out of the drizzling dusk to the warmth and glow of the kitchen.

Rose lifted her eyebrows expressively and wrinkled her nose at him as he crossed to the wood box. And the boys looked at each other and ducked their heads, stifling laughter. But his mother only gave him a casual glance as she

lifted a brown slice of meat on her fork and transferred it expertly to the hot platter on top of a kettle.

"Drain the potatoes, Rose, and dish up, while I fix your father's supper," she said in her brisk, anxious tone. And she set a finger upon her lips and shook her head toward the living room, while her glance held Lynn's. In the family sign language that meant he must guard his speech, for the invalid was in a tantrum.

"I smell sheep! You can't fool *me*! There's a sheep in this house, and if you don't put him out I'll tear the damn place down!" boomed from the next room. "Just because I can't walk or help myself, you think it's smart to bring sheep into the house to devil me with! Where is it? You can't lie to me; I can tell a sheep ten mile off!"

Lynn gave his mother a quick, questioning look, but she only pressed her lips together and shook her head. Half afraid that she might detect his secret, he lifted the big coffeepot from the back of the stove and filled the great china mustache cup, with "Father" printed fancifully in gilt around its middle in a wreath of pink roses with green leaves. The gilt and the green were wearing away, and well they might, since three times each day for the past six years that cup had been meticulously washed and wiped, after serving old Joel his strong black coffee sweetened to a sirupy consistency.

Mom stood for a long breath, the heaped plate in one hand, the cup with its mismatched saucer—Joel had thrown the one belonging with the cup two years before, trying to brain Lynn as he left the room—trembling in the other hand. Then, with the look in her eyes which she always wore when Joel was on the rampage, she went in where he was.

Rose and Lynn exchanged glances, but no word was spoken in the kitchen.

Between mouthfuls, Joel raved of

sheep. He wanted his gun, so he could shoot the damned thing or the damned person that offended him. He accused his family again and again of harboring sheep to spite him; and even the boys ceased to find anything funny, at last, in his revilings. A pallor was creeping into Mrs. Hayward's face. She waited until Lynn was nearly through with his supper, then took down her shawl from its nail and pulled it over her head, gestured to Lynn, and went outside. In a minute or two Lynn followed her. She had lighted the lantern in the woodshed, and she held it up to scan his face.

"Lynn, you aren't going off to-night again, are you?" she asked worriedly. "I don't know—I'm afraid your father is losing his mind! All this talk about a sheep in the house—it ain't like him, Lynn. I wish you'd stay home to-night."

Lynn avoided her eyes, pretending to busy himself with the making of a cigarette. He wanted to laugh—and yet he didn't want to, somehow. He wanted to put his arms around his mother and tell her the truth. But she hated sheep, too.

"It's just general cussedness," he told her gruffly. "I guess he run out of subjects to devil you about, and he thought up this. I—there's a fellow staying at the upper ranch, Mom—he ain't fit to be alone, and I promised I'd come back."

"Why, for mercy's sake! Who is it?"

"Nobody you ever saw in your life," Lynn parried. "He came over to look after the—cattle. I feel I ought to stick around nights, till he gets better. You can't tell—"

"What's the matter with him? If he's sick, why don't you have Saunders come over and get him? I'm worried about your father, Lynn. There's nothing to put such an idea into his head. If he wanted to act up, there's the tax bill, just come the other day—that ought

to keep him busy swearing for a month, it's so big. No, this idea of a sheep in the house—that ain't natural. I don't know what possesses him to act so!"

Lynn had a sudden thought, and the brilliance of it made him laugh.

"Say, look here! I'll bet anything you like he's just trying to get a rise out of us about his darned sheep! I'll bet he never started in on it till the kids and I came home, and he knew he had an audience. Did he, now?"

"Well, no. He began to smell sheep just before you came." She tucked her hair back under the shawl and her eyes took on an introspective look.

"Setting the stage for a big row," Lynn declared with artful scorn. "If I'd swallowed the bait and gone in to argue with him he'd have called me a sheep-herder—I'd bet money on that. I see through him, Mom, like a book! He gets tired sitting there playing solitaire, and he wants some excitement, is all.

"You notice," he went on speciously, "I've been keeping away pretty much of the time lately; and I guess he misses having me around to cuss at. I've got plenty to do without playing Daniel to his lions, Mom. I'm building a new storm shed up at the ranch—fixing things up so we can take care of more cattle. I'm not going to wait for Dad to do something. I'm going to lift myself by my bootstraps, Mom. I—well, I wasn't going to tell you, but I've taken a little bunch of the stock and I'm going to get a start that way."

"You've taken cows on shares? Why in the world didn't you say something, Lynn? Why make so much of a mystery about it?" A look of relief stole into her eyes. "I don't know but what that's a real good idea, Lynn."

"Well, you know Dad. I don't want him to get hold of it, Mom. He'd just beller about it every time I came near the house. There'll be enough pasture money; as much as he ever gets, so

he needn't know anything about it. You just forget what I told you, Mommie." He stopped, drew in his breath, and suddenly laid a hand across her shoulder.

"If you can keep a secret, Mom, I'll tell you something not even Rose dreams of. Cross your heart, Mom?" In the lantern light his eyes shone down at her as she looked up inquiringly into his face.

It was the old demand he used to make of her when he was just a little fellow. Her lips softened, trembled a little as she took the old boyish pledge.

"Cross my heart and hope to die, Linnie. What is it?"

"Well, I—— Don't you dare breathe this, Mom—to Rose or anybody! I want to get a start and make a stake, because—well—aw, shucks! Some day I'm going to marry the little school-teacher in Elk Basin. So I'm fixing the upper ranch up——"

"Lynn!" His mother paused, choked a little. "How——"

"Not for quite a while, Mom. But the kids are taking hold real well, lately. They'll be able to look after things here in a year or two. And of course I'd be on the job, too—just the same as I am now, almost. In a couple of years or so——"

"Oh!" Mom's breath escaped in a sigh of relief. "You—you scared me, Lynn, for a minute! I thought you meant right away; and we're in no shape to have a wedding in the family, goodness knows!"

"It's a long time to wait, but—— Well, you see now that I've got to hustle and get things moving around here. I expect to be at the upper ranch most of the time, from now on. I thought it would keep Dad smoothed down some, too, if I keep away from here as much as possible. So don't you worry about a thing. I've got a mark to work to, now, and I'll bring the old ranch back a-whooping! You'll see."

"So that's what has changed you so, lately!" His mother smiled, which she didn't do very often. "I've been most crazy, trying to make you out! You haven't been like the same boy. But I'm glad, Lynn, if it makes you happy. I know she must be real nice. Rose likes her. We'd invite her out here, if it wasn't for your father. But you know how he is!"

"Yes," said Lynn, with a grim little nod, "I know how he is, all right! I wouldn't want her to come here, so you can just put that out of your mind. I'm going back up to the ranch, I told the fellow I would. You needn't worry about Dad—I'll bet seventeen cents he'll forget all about his sheep, soon as I clear out."

Ten minutes after that, Lynn was riding smilingly through the darkness and the rain, while a cold wind rustled the bare treetops along the trail. He had given Mom something to think about, he reflected; something to keep her mind from scouting out the truth about that sheep in the house.

CHAPTER XXII.

IN THE WELL!

THE storm passed and the days turned warm and sunny again, that enchanting season, Indian summer, laying its soft, bright veil over the land. Lynn hoped the fine weather would last until Thanksgiving or beyond. Helge once more grazed the sheep out on the farther confines of the Hayward holdings, with the boys riding importantly between his camp and the upper ranch. Their cave up in the cliffs was forgotten now, for they had found a new and fascinating game—they were going to save their money and buy lambs from Lynn, and start into the sheep business for themselves. They spent hours wrangling over the brand they would have and just where they would build their corral. They felt like mil-

lionaires, and talked as they felt. Whether Lynn knew it or not, the changed current of his thoughts was sweeping the boys into the consciousness of prosperity. They were maturing fast, like plants growing in dew and sun. They never would be haywire now; a new manliness, a growing pride in their responsibilities would take care of that.

And for Lynn himself the days seemed on the wing. Taking a ramshackle lot of sheds and pasture fences and turning them into a snug sheep ranch in the short time left to him before winter was a job to daunt many a more seasoned worker than he. But Lynn went whistling about his labors, which lasted from dawn to dark, and sometimes after; there was the lower ranch to look after, errands to do for Rose and his Mother, tobacco and blood purifier to supply for his Dad—which last he did most effectually by sending in an order to Sears-Roebuck for a dozen bottles, and then doling them out to the old man as they were demanded. Then there were hurried and more-or-less stealthy trips in to see his little school-teacher.

The sheep grew fat and frisky; and he had not lost one from wolves or sickness. The boys were trapping the marauders now, and more than once came in to the ranch proudly dragging a "loafer" wolf at the end of their rope.

In the press of work and the glamour of love Lynn's ponderings over the mystery of Heinie's murder grew less and less frequent. To be sure, whenever he knelt and looked down the well at that place behind the ledge where his fortune lay safely hidden, thoughts of Heinie and Hank Miller and Bill Witherspoon would come to nag him with the tragedy that had placed that money in his hands.

But he did not gaze into the well as often as he had at first. He had too many other things to think of, and he

did not need to look. He knew the money was there—it couldn't get away, for not another soul knew of it. Where first he had tingled with the thrill of knowing it was there, a quiet, inner glow of satisfaction and of economic security filled the back of his mind waking or sleeping. He could plan and work with steady hands and brain, for he knew that he had wealth.

That knowledge spread a beneficent warmth of mood over all that he planned or did. Things thrived under it. Yet the actual thought of the jug and its contents did not claim his attention so much of the time; he could actually forget it now and then.

He was forgetting it now, as he went whistling down the path to the well, one day in early November. He was alone on the place, the boys having gone home to see if their mother and Rose needed anything, and Helge being off with the sheep. Lynn was thinking that if he hurried supper he might ride in to Elk Basin to see Jan, as he now called her in his ardent thoughts. He had not seen the little school-teacher for nearly a week, and a week is eternity to an engaged young man who is as deeply in love as Lynn was.

As he knotted the well rope in the twisted wire bail of the coal-oil can and lowered it into the well, a swishing sound behind him made him turn his body just as a rope loop settled over it. He was yanked backward as Hank Miller rushed up, shortening the distance between them and keeping the rope tight with nervous, hand-over-hand motions. For a minute Lynn lay half stunned, his head bleeding a little where the sharp corner of a rock had violently struck it. And in that minute Hank was upon him, winding the rope round and round Lynn's arms and body. Lynn had sense enough to brace his arms slightly away from his ribs, but that was all he could do for himself. Hank dragged him to his feet and wound

the rope with a half hitch or two around one pole of the gallows that had supported the well pulley in former times.

"Now, damn yuh! I gotcha where I wantcha!" Hank muttered viciously. He slapped Lynn painfully, first on one cheek, then on the other. "Now you'll come clean, you——"

His eyes were bloodshot, and the fumes of whisky as he thrust his face forward almost sickened Lynn. Evidently he was crazy drunk—he must have been to have found the nerve for the bold attack—but that did not make him less dangerous. Lynn did not for a minute belittle the malignant intent of the man.

"Where's Heinie's money?" Hank demanded, drawing back to watch Lynn's eyes, as a cat watches a mouse it has just pounced upon and pawed. "Come clean, damn yuh, or I'll tear yuh limb from limb!"

"Last I heard, he'd spent it for peanuts and lemonade in Cheyenne," Lynn forced himself to reply. "That's what he told the folks."

"Where's the money he had hid out somewheres? You know, damn yuh! You'll tell, too, before I'm through with yuh! Where is it?" Again he lifted his hand and slapped Lynn's reddened cheek. "Come on—spit 'er out, 'fore I do worse to yuh!"

"You go to hell!" cried Lynn valiantly, between blows. "You dirty murderer, if Heinie had any money, why didn't you get it outa him before you killed him?" And he cursed Hank with all the vituperative phrases he had ever heard in his life.

"I'll kill yuh for that," panted Hank, looking about him for a club. "I'll beat yuh to death, you damned, nosey thief, you! But you'll *tell*! You can't fool me—you got it! What did yuh do with it? I'll kill yuh by inches if yuh don't come through!"

To Lynn, in those nightmare minutes, it seemed as though Hank would do it.

But even as the savage blows rained upon him he was thinking. And when, in sheer exhaustion, Hank stopped, Lynn turned his bloody face toward him in abject surrender.

"Well, yuh ready to talk now?" Hank leered at him. "*Where is it?*"

"In the well," Lynn mumbled, for his mouth was swelling noticeably.

"Ah-ha! I thought you'd come clean, if I ever got my hands on yuh!" Hank gloated.

He turned and stooped, looking down into the dusky depths, with the shine of water twenty-five feet or more below. And as he stood so, Lynn gathered himself together, strained forward against the ropes and kicked with the sudden intensity of a mule.

Six inches farther away and he couldn't have made it. As it was, he thanked the good Lord for his long legs and for the fact that Hank had concentrated his brutal fury upon Lynn's head and body, leaving his legs free. He listened, expecting to hear the impact of Hank's body with the stout braces just above the ledge. But by some chance Hank made a clean dive—there was a terrific and hollow splash when he landed.

Lynn waited, heard the roar of Hank's voice shouting oaths and threats, and tried to grin. The water, if Hank stood on the rocky bottom, was no more than chest deep. Hank would not drown; but neither would he climb out without help, for the rocks of the curbing were too smooth and slippery for a hand hold, as Lynn knew from experience. Too often had he gone down there fishing for the bucket dropped in, or to clean the well, not to be very sure of what he was doing when he kicked Hank. He had seen the rope he used for climbing up out of the well coiled there on the platform—where it would stay for some time, so far as he was concerned.

Hank would play frog-in-the-well.

But Lynn, after the first few minutes of struggling against the rope, found that he himself would stay tied until some one released him—and if the boys decided to stay down at the other ranch all night, he was not so very much better off than Hank. He had tried to hold himself so that the rope could not be pulled tight and he would have some chance of getting free, but Hank had taken a turn or two that baffled all Lynn's painful twistings and turnings.

"Yuh want me to *die* down here?" bawled Hank.

"No!" shouted Lynn. "You're like a poisoned rat—I don't want you to die on the ranch; you'd putrefy the whole place!"

Hank replied to that; and Lynn retorted with another statement, which was neither complimentary nor refined.

"You lied when you said the money was down here!" bellowed Hank, just as if Lynn had sinned grievously against him, with the falsehood. "I'll fix yuh for that!"

"I never said there was any money in the well!" Lynn contemptuously explained. "I just said, 'In the well,' and in yuh went! What the devil do you think I'd be doing with money down in a well?"

Hank's answer to that lasted for some minutes, but Lynn did not listen to all of it. He was trying to wriggle an arm loose and he was beginning to see with a finality of hopelessness that it couldn't be done. He hadn't a knife in his pocket; Sid had borrowed it for something and had failed to return it. Perhaps he couldn't have got his knife out if it had been in his pocket; but he mentally cursed the carelessness of Sid just the same.

An hour crawled by. The blood dried on his face and hands, where it had been oozing from the cuts and bruises Hank had made with the stick. In the well the splashing and scraping grew fainter, more mechanical in sound.

"I'm dyin'!" wailed Hank's sepulchral voice with a whine in it now. "I'm chillin' t' death down here! Lemme out, Lynn! I won't touch yuh again—honest!"

"Go to the devil!" Lynn shouted back. "You tied me up. If you die, it's your own doing!"

"You can keep the money, Lynn, if yuh let me up! You can keep the money. I'll never say another word!"

"Thanks!" cried Lynn. "I sure would keep it, if I had it!"

Then Sid and Joe came trotting up the trail, arguing over something as usual, their young voices the most welcome sound Lynn could have imagined at that moment. They did not see him at the well until he shouted to them, but then they kicked their horses into a gallop and came up in a flurry of dust.

With Hank's own rope they hauled him up, Lynn's bruised muscles protesting against the load and his head spinning from the pain of effort. Hank was like a snake made torpid with the cold—helpless, unable to coil and strike, but spitting venom still. Lynn roared:

"I oughta kill you, you dirty rat, but I won't. You'll get all that's coming to you, I guess. But don't you ever cross my trail again. Where's your horse?"

CHAPTER XXIII.

DOLLAR CONCHOS.

"GEE!" cried Sid, setting down the coffeepot after solicitously filling Lynn's cup, "I most forgot what we come back for. But you couldn't do it anyway, I guess. You sure are bunged up, all right; and I don't s'pose you'd want her to see yuh lookin' that way."

"Who? What you talkin' about?" Lynn turned his one good eye toward the boy, the other being closed with a gash that narrowly escaped destroying that eye.

"Well, Maw sent us back to have you come home. We got company down

there. Rose was in town to-day, and the school-teacher come back with her and is goin' to stay all night and to-morrow and all day Sunday. Maw killed two chickens and made punkin pie, and she wanted you to come down for supper. And say, Lynn! Pa's just as nice as pie to her! Never cussed once, while we was there—did he, Joe? That's 'cause Maw got to askin' her things about her folks, and they found out she musta been old Heinie's gran'daughter, 'cause her mother's name was Deitrich, 'fore she was married, and she was born in Omaha. Maw got all excited and said that was Heinie's name, only nobody ever called him by it.

"So Pa thinks she's the goods, bein' related to somebuddy he likes. He told her stories about him and Heinie gittin' a bunch of horses back from the Injuns when they first come here, and all kinda things that I never heard 'im say a word about! An' say, Lynn! She talked and laughed with Dad, just as if she *liked* him! And Pa—he *joshed* her about things! What's the matter, Lynn? Yuh sick? Coffee too strong or something?"

Lynn had turned a sallow white and sagged back against the wall as if he were going to faint. Little Joe ran for a dipper of water, but it was not needed. Lynn pulled himself together and went staggering in like a drunken man to lie on his bed and think, while the boys went tiptoeing around the place with scared eyes. Sid would have saddled and ridden posthaste for a doctor, only there wasn't any short of Rock Springs or Green River, and he was afraid Lynn might die before he got back.

"You s'prised him too much tellin' him about Paw joshin' anybody," Little Joe diagnosed rebukingly to Sid in the kitchen. "He's too sick to be s'prised that way. I guess we can't go on back—we better stay here and tend to Lynn, don't yuh think?"

Sid did think so; and the two sat by

the kitchen stove and whispered anathemas against Hank Miller until their heads began to nod. Then, as Lynn seemed to be asleep, and there was nothing more they could do for him, they went to bed.

But Lynn was not asleep. He lay there thinking, thinking—planning, too, just what he must do, now that Heinie apparently had left an heir—an heiress, to be exact. Dreaming, too, as lovers will, of the look in Jan's eyes, when he told her the truth—when he poured into her lap those precious packages of bank notes. But at last he slept, and in waking felt the need of action. He was stiff and sore from the beating Hank had given him, and ordinarily he would have felt that he was unable to ride; but with Jan down at the other ranch—wondering no doubt what had kept him—he could not content himself away. He would ride down there, sick or well. He knew that.

But while he was sitting by the kitchen table, letting Sid dress the cut on his head and the terrible bruises on his face and shoulders and arms in an effort to make him look halfway human, here came the two girls, storming in to know what in the world was the matter that he hadn't come to supper last night.

Lynn told them, naturally, with the boys adding frills, when they thought Lynn was not doing justice to the affair.

"I know in my soul he's the one that killed Heinie—your grandfather, Jan, the boys tell me. If that's true——"

"Oh, it is—I'm sure of it! And to think I didn't know, and he met that awful death! I just *know* Hank Miller did it! If he hadn't, why would he be so very certain there was money left that he didn't get? Hanging's too good, Lynn, for a man like that."

Little Joe, his eyes round and filled with tears, suddenly reached into his overalls pocket, drew out something and dashed it to the floor.

"He oughta be killed!" he cried with childish vehemence. "I—I *hate* dollar conchos! I was going to save dollars enough to go on my bridle and get some chaps with dollar conchos on, like that man had—— But I hate 'em! I wouldn't wear one! You couldn't *make* me!"

Wide-eyed, Lynn and Jan faced each other in mute questioning. Then Lynn stooped painfully and picked up the object that Joe had thrown down—a silver dollar with two holes punched through the center; a dollar coined in the year 1886.

"Where'd you get this, kid?" Lynn asked huskily, turning the thing over in his hand. Joe's lip quivered.

"I—I—I never stole it—honest! I never——"

"He picked it up at Heinie's that morning when we went and found him," Sid explained agitatedly, the significance of it beginning to dawn upon him. "Joe opened the door and it was laying right there on the floor, and it had a buckskin string on it. Joe thought it was a real dollar at first and he picked it up, and then we both seen Heinie laying on the floor, and we beat it. I guess Joe put it in his pocket, without knowin' it, we was so scared. And then he kept it and was going to get some more and make him a set of conchos to match. If it come off Hank's chaps, he musta been the one fightin' with Heinie, wasn't he?" In his excitement, Sid's voice broke and finished on a shrill high note—but no one laughed as was usually the case when Sid's voice played tricks with him.

"Peterson's got to know about this," Lynn said after a pause. "You kids run and saddle up; you'll have to go in and tell about this concho."

"I never stole it!" wailed little Joe, backing off. "I found it, I tell yuh!"

"Why of course you didn't steal it!" cried the little school-teacher, drawing him to her and holding him close.

"We're so glad you found it, Joey, because if you hadn't, when Hank Miller came back he'd have sneaked it out of sight, and we never would have known anything about his losing it. Lynn looked for something to show Hank was there—why, he looked all over for this very concho! We thought maybe Hank lost one, you see. We didn't know you were keeping it safe. Now, when you tell Peterson, don't you see——"

"Hank'll get his, won't he?" Little Joe drew an arm swiftly across his eyes in hope that she would not see how he almost had cried, and grinned up into her face. It'll be gettin' even with him for beating up Lynn!"

"No!" The little school-teacher backed to a bench and sat down, still keeping her arm around him. "No! We mustn't even think of getting even, honey. That isn't the way to think, because that's building out a hate track with your thoughts; and if you build a hate track you can be sure something *you'll* hate to have will come traveling right back to you on that track. I can't explain just *all* about thought tracks now, Joey, but remember this, always: *You get just exactly what you give yourself.* Nothing more, and nothing less. We mustn't—we can't afford to hate Hank Miller, though we can't help hating the thing he did—or that it seems to us he did.

"Did Lynn build a bad track that made Hank come and tie him up and most kill him?" The pitiless logic of a child spoke there, and it brought a startled glance from the little school-teacher. But she did not flinch or dodge the issue.

"Yes," she said gently, "I expect—yes, of course Lynn built a track for it. The law *works*, regardless of who sets it in motion. Lynn has been hating Hank Miller, ever since Hank met him in town and called him—'Haywire.'" She hesitated to say the word, but only for a second; though the color flamed

in her cheeks afterward. "Lynn was angry and thought bitter things. And since the murder he has hated Hank more and more. It's—it's heartbreaking to see what terrible things we do give ourselves sometimes, but it must be so until we learn to build only good thought tracks. Do you see?"

"Uh-huh. Did Paw build out a bad track to get his legs paralyzed? I guess," Joe added shrewdly, "he just cussed 'em that way. Does his cussing everybody——"

"We'll have to go now, Joey," the little school-teacher hastily interrupted. "Lynn's in a hurry, dear, and I'll have other chances to tell you all about track building. Just remember not to hate any one, yourself, even if you do have to serve justice by telling what you know. Hank is really to be pitied, Joey; for if he's guilty of what we suspect, just think what a terrible price he's going to have to pay!"

"Uh-huh! But did Paw——"

"School's dismissed!" cried Jan firmly, getting up and pinning on her hat. "I'm sorry I kept you waiting, Lynn. But I always think that what a child learns before he's twelve will go with him through life—and I simply couldn't let that revenge idea take root in little Joe's mind. The time to pull it up and plant a new thought there was right now, while he's all excited over things."

"I guess we all needed it," Lynn said soberly. "In your own quiet way you sure have given me something to think about, lady!"

"Well," said Jan smilingly, "for your especial benefit I'll just add one very important truth. In the ancient times there was a saying: 'As a man thinketh about himself, he becomes.' Nowadays we've changed that to, 'As a man thinketh, so is he;' but the original is much better and truer, I think. 'As a man thinketh about himself, he becomes.' Think it over, when you have time,

Lynn. It will bear a good deal of study."

"You're darn right!" Lynn agreed, his thoughts flashing to his brown jug. "I thought haywire for six or eight years, and——"

"Oh, come on!" Rose cried impatiently. "You seem to forget what-all we have to do to-day. And Jan, if you don't mind, I think I'll go back home. This is Saturday, remember, and there's the kitchen to scrub and all the baking to do. The things I'd have to thinketh about myself, if I went off and left it all for Mom to do, would bring me the tribulations of Job—boils and all!"

"Rose, you're the limit!" The little school-teacher laughed.

And they went out to meet the boys, who came riding up from the corral leading Loney, all saddled and bridled and ready for Lynn.

Peterson stood in the middle of his little office and turned the dollar concho meditatively in his fingers, while Lynn, Sid and Joe watched him intently.

"It sure looks as if it might be so," he said cautiously, at last. "But I've seen stronger evidence than this here turn out to be just chance and no more. For one thing, it ain't any cinch that this dollar was ever used for a concho. It prob'ly was made for one—the holes are right and all—but whether it was ever used——"

"It was a concho, all righty," Sid declared in a deep bass voice. "Joe's got the string that was on it—ain't yuh, Joe?"

Little Joe stepped forward and began emptying his pockets onto the deputy's table. Being a perfectly normal boy, he had string and a good many other things; and with eager fingers he began sorting the pile, until out of the mess he pulled a short piece of buckskin thong worn shiny and round in the center. Peterson carefully strung the concho on it and stood eying the result.

"Well, that pulls the cinch up another yank," he admitted. "Is Hank in town, do you know?"

"I'll mighty quick find out," Lynn said. And pulling his hat down tighter on his head, he went out and down toward the Elkhorn saloon, where Hank was most likely to be found. As he passed by a little harness shop alongside the saloon, Hank stepped out from between the two buildings. He stopped short when he saw Lynn; but the latter young man never hesitated an instant. Almost automatically his fist shot out and caught Hank under the ear. He went down so hard he bounced, and Lynn landed astraddle his body and began unbuckling his chaps.

Men came running from all directions, though the street had looked empty when Lynn walked out of Peterson's office. As Lynn got up and began pulling the chaps off the limp legs of Hank, Jack Peterson himself arrived on the scene, the two boys at his heels. But Lynn gave no one a glance; he had discovered something, and he knelt again and began examining each concho in turn, even flopping Hank's legs over, so that he could get at the row underneath.

"All 1886!" he cried, looking up into Peterson's face. "No—here's one, 1899. Right here, just about halfway up. What do you make of that, Jack? Seems funny, doesn't it?" All the same year except one!"

"That there's the year of the big winter," "Lefty" Jordan spoke up. "Time all the cattle died and skinnners went out in the spring and cleaned up big money skinnin' dead cattle. Hank was one of a bunch over in Buffalo Medders that had a contest to see who skun the most critters in the season. Hank won; made quite a big stake. He put them 1886 dollar conchos on to remember his skinnin' prize."

"In memorium!" Lynn said dryly. "Well, Jack, you can cinch this thing

right now, if you're a mind to. Just send up to Mrs. Moore's and get Miss MacIvor, and bring her down here and let her tell you about what she saw the night Heinie was killed. Go on—she don't know about these dates."

"Now you're talkin'!" Peterson approved. "One of you kids——" But he found the request superfluous, for both Sid and Joe were already half-way to Mrs. Moore's.

It was little Joe who made the announcement.

"Come on, quick! Hank Miller's track's comin' home and they want you down there!" was the way Joe put it. But the little school-teacher understood the excited little fellow and hurried as fast as she could.

Jan, telling what she had seen that night when she had toothache and the moon was shining and she stood looking out into the street at two o'clock in the morning, pointed toward one of Hank's legs.

"I noticed a dollar was missing just about there," she said. "They all showed very plainly in the moonlight, and I noticed the space where one was gone. It was on that leg—it would have to be, of course, since he rode in from that direction." She pointed.

"And that," Lynn cried triumphantly, "is the 1899 dollar, Jack! Is that enough?"

"Plenty!" Peterson laconically replied, as he took a firm grip on Hank's collar.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"DAD, YOU WALKED!"

LYNN rode down the trail from the upper ranch the evening of that same day; and though he did not sing or whistle as he rode—his bruised mouth was too sore for that—his thoughts came smiling from his inner soul, which sang of things to come. To prove that this was a day of feasting and festivity in the Hayward family, all

the leggy young chickens on the place ran squawking to the brush when he appeared at the gate, and there were some with tail feathers missing to tell of the narrow escapes they had had from the frying pan. But Lynn had no eyes or thoughts for the perturbed fowls that fled from him as he strode up the path to the house, for he was thinking of something quite different, even though his nostrils did dilate pleasurably at certain odors floating out from the kitchen. For Lynn was about to play Santa Claus two months ahead of time.

He even forgot old Joel altogether, as he opened the door and walked into the kitchen, setting a certain important brown jug down upon the table where Rose and Jan together were just smoothing a clean white cloth for supper.

"Come here, Jan. Mom, Rose—yes, you two kids may as well take a front seat, too—sit down while I show you something that's a sight for sore eyes. Move your chairs up closer, take a long breath, and listen!"

He watched them gather and seat themselves expectantly around the table.

"First," he went on, "I want to explain something. That night when I rode up to Heinie's with the bread and cookies—the night he was killed—Oh, say, wait a minute, though! Janie, can you prove you're his granddaughter? In court, I mean. Have you got any papers or anything to show for it?"

"Why, yes," said the little schoolteacher, watching him big-eyed, "I have all mother's pictures and papers, pictures of my grandfather and grandmother, and letters and her birth certificate and everything. Mother went to live with Aunt Jessie when grandmother died, and for a while grandfather used to write to Aunt Jessie and send money for the baby—that was mother. He always signed his full name. That seemed so funny to me

when I read the letters after Aunt Jessie died. 'Your obedient servant, Heinrich Deitrich.' Every letter he ever wrote to her is signed that way.

"I always thought of him as Heinrich Deitrich, after I grew up and got the letters, and I never heard any one speak of him as Heinie; so that's why it never once occurred to me that this old man was my grandfather. I supposed grandfather had died long ago. Aunt Jessie hadn't heard from him for years. She was an old lady when I was just a little girl and mother took me to see her. It was just a few months before she died. When she was gone mother got all of Aunt Jessie's things, and that's how I happen to have the letters." She paused, looking from Lynn to his mother and back.

"Yes, I'm sure I have plenty of proof, if it's necessary to prove it," she continued. "A friend in Denver who's cashier in a bank has all my papers and everything in safe-keeping for me. Why? What is it, Lynn?"

Lynn heaved a great sigh and laid his hand on the jug.

"That's all I wanted to be sure of," he said. "Now I'll shoot the works. It'll be a big relief to get the thing off my chest, let me tell you. Well, you girls remember I told you I saw old Heinie through the window that night, and he was counting money; but I didn't tell you how much it was. I didn't dare, to tell the truth. When I heard he'd been murdered I knew if I told all I saw that night I'd probably be lynched for the murder. But now it's pinned on Hank Miller—"

"He got his track back!" little Joe put in promptly. "He got what he sent for—only he didn't know it was that big a package, I bet!"

"Be still, Joey." Mom gave him a mild slap on the shoulder. "Lynn's talking!"

"Well, yes, I guess that's right—he got what he sent for, when he killed

Heinie. Well, where he got it I don't know, but Heinie had more money spread out on the table than I ever saw in my life or expected to see. I just stood there like a stump and watched him count it and put it in a sack and go hide it behind a rock in the wall. Then I got on my horse and rode off. It made me so darned sore to think of him being such a miser, and letting us do things for him while he pretended to be poor, that—well, I wouldn't have given him that bread if it was the last thing on earth I could do for him. It was, all right, but I didn't know that, of course. So I went to the upper ranch and stayed there all night and came on home next morning.

"Then, when Rose met me on the trail and told me what had happened, I was pretty near rattled for a while. I knew somebody must have got wind of that money, and I didn't know but what he got away with it. The thing bothered me. I couldn't rest till I knew for sure. So I went back, after the funeral, and looked. It was there, all right. So I took it out of the hole and put the rock back like it was, and took the money to the upper ranch.

"And after a while it seemed to me like I had as much right to it as anybody; more right than anybody else, because we'd done so much for Heinie, and I didn't think he had any relatives. He never talked about anybody that belonged to him, you remember, Mom."

"He did to me, once," Mom said. "I don't know what got him started, but he told me about his wife dying, and he said he had a girl somewhere, he didn't know where. He thought maybe she was dead. It was the only time he ever mentioned the matter, though, so far as I remember."

"Well, I didn't know that," said Lynn; "so I made up my mind I'd just hang onto the money and say nothing about it. I thought it'd go to the State,

if I turned it in to Peterson—and I guess it would have, too. But I couldn't spend it, of course. That would be too raw—when everybody was wondering who killed him. So I hid it where nobody would ever find it, and went on about my business.

"But here's a funny thing, Jan. I got to thinking about it, after what you said this morning up at the ranch. You've got the right dope on life, all right. I couldn't spend a dime of this money—I'll show you why in a minute—but I knew I had it. It made me feel rich. I *was* rich. I didn't realize just what it was doing to me till you said what you did. Now I know you're right."

"'As a man thinketh in his heart about himself, so does he become?'" asked Jan. "Of course I'm right. Before, you felt poor, and you *were* poor. You thought poverty thoughts and you lived a life of poverty. When you changed your thoughts—but it took money to change you, in this case, because you didn't know the law—when you began to think rich thoughts, you felt rich and you *were* rich. It always is so, because it must be so. It is the law of life. Go on. We want to hear more."

"Well, that's all, I guess," said Lynn. "Only I bucked up and put my right foot forward, as they say, just thinking I had a fortune behind me. I don't know whether I'd ever have spent any of it or not. I know I wouldn't have, still I got rich—and then I wouldn't need to. And then I found out it belongs to you. So—here it is, school-ma'am! Now you can sing 'Little Brown Jug, Don't I Love Thee!' Where's a fork or something? I've got the cork in pretty tight."

He looked at Rose, who flew to get what he wanted. She came back with a meat fork, but no one remarked upon the remarkable use to which it was being put.

"But how much is it, Lynn?" Jan asked impatiently.

"Merely the small sum of ninety-two thousand dollars, Jan."

"Ninety-two—thousand — dollars?" Sid's voice squealed the last word.

"In that jug?" Jan seemed to think he was joking her.

"You wait till I get this cork out and I'll show you! All in thousand-dollar bills—except two that are five thousand apiece., Good reason why I never spent any of your money, Jan! Mighty hard to get rid of a bill of that denomination!"

"For the land's sake!" cried Rose. "How did Heinie ever get hold of that much?"

"Found richer diggings than he let on, I guess. It's the only way he could have. Soon as I get around to it I'm going to hunt around for the place where he dug it out."

The cork came out with a *plop*! There was silence, then a gasp, then more gasps. With the fork Lynn was bringing up packages of bank notes to make their eyes bulge.

"Oo-oo!" This from little Joe. "Is all that *money*? Real money to buy things with?"

"You bet! There's your supper, Jan. Beats fried chicken, don't it? Feel of that one. That's a nice silky five-thousand dollars! See?"

"Oh, Lynn!" cried Jan. "You keep that one to pay off the notes for your sheep! Go on—you must! And here's this one—that's yours to buy another band of sheep. Go on—take it! Lynn Hayward, if you don't take these two five thousands, I'll never marry you in the world!"

"Oh, golly what a track!" gasped little Joe. "That'll make you an old maid, I bet!"

"I take it up right away," the little school-teacher laughed excitedly. "But I'll put out another one. Lynn, take these two five-thousands, for your sheep

business, and I'll marry you to-morrow, if you want me to!"

"*Sheep?* What's this about *sheep?*"

The voice of old Joel fairly lifted them from their seats. The voice sounded close. So close that Lynn, standing with his back to the living-room door, could feel the hot breath that ejected the words. And that was strange! He turned and looked uncomprehendingly into the face of his father, towering there in the doorway on a level with his own. Had the ghost of the old man invaded the kitchen, the Hayward family would not have sat more stricken with amazement.

Then Lynn threw the fork unheeding from him and reached out, grasping the old man by the shoulders.

"You walked! Dad, you *walked*!"

Lynn choked. He stared with blurred eyes into the startled, half-shamed face of the father.

"Joel! Why—why, Joel, dear!" Mom came tottering to clasp her arms about him where he stood clinging to the door, his unaccustomed legs shaking with the strain. "Oh, thank God, thank God!"

"Good land!" cried Rose's high, bright voice, fighting to keep sanity in the family. "They say curiosity killed the cat, but I never heard it would bring dead legs to life! Had to get right up and come see what the excitement's about, didn't you, Dad?"

"Yeah!" Lynn took the cue from Rose and pushed a chair forward. "Now you're here, sit down, Dad, and feast your eyes on all the money in the world."

"What's this I heard about you goin' into sheep?" old Joel repeated, but this time with all the truculent bellow knocked out of his voice.

"Oh," said Lynn airily, "John True-man at Green River advised me to get a bunch of sheep and get rich. There's big money in sheep, he says. So he staked me to enough to buy a band.

Finest lot of merino ewes you ever laid eyes on, Dad!"

"I don't want to lay eyes on 'em!" Joel said stubbornly, and clamped his mouth shut so tight his beard stood straight out.

"You won't object to laying eyes on the money when I sell the wool next summer," Lynn retorted. But the little school-teacher shook her head at him and leaned forward, placing one soft hand over the big fist of Joel, where it lay doubled on the table.

"We'd like to buy the upper ranch, Mr. Hayward. Here—as much as you want!" she said, and laughed and pushed packages of money toward him. "Lynn and I are going to get married and raise sheep, and I love that place up there in the hills."

"The Dollar outfit told me I couldn't make a go of it," Lynn craftily observed. "They tried to drive the sheep over a cut-bank into Pacific Creek, when I was bringing 'em home. Pete Wilder said I'd never——"

"Don't tell me what Pete Wilder says!" snapped Joel. "Who's runnin' this ranch, anyway? You tell Saunders an' Pete Wilder to mind their own dam-pesky business!"

"Well, that's about what I said to Pete."

"How much, father-in-law?" With red cheeks and eyes that shone, the little school-teacher held up handfuls of packages before him. "After some short

legal details, this is all ours. How much for the upper ranch? Lynn and I want to be neighbors of yours, and we *don't* want to pay this over to the Dollar outfit."

"Oh—I guess I'm able to make you a weddin' present of the place, if you want it," Joel said gruffly.

Rose began to sniff; then she gave a great cry as she jumped from the table and rushed across the room.

"The chicken's almost burned to a crisp!" she cried in tragic tones. "Bring Dad's chair out here, Lynn. And Mommie, come out of your trance and make the gravy! I'm half starved, and I guess everybody else is!"

The tension relaxed. Old Joel, settled in his big chair at the head of the table, stared around at the room he had not seen for eight years, and a great peace seemed to settle upon his lined face.

"Them tendons snapped back into place," he muttered in an explanatory tone to every one in general. "I was like a hamstrung horse. Felt 'em slip back where they belong. Be all right now, I guess. Where's my blood purifier? I need a dose right now."

"Haywire!" Lynn suddenly exclaimed, and sent a sweeping glance from face to face. "Who says haywire?"

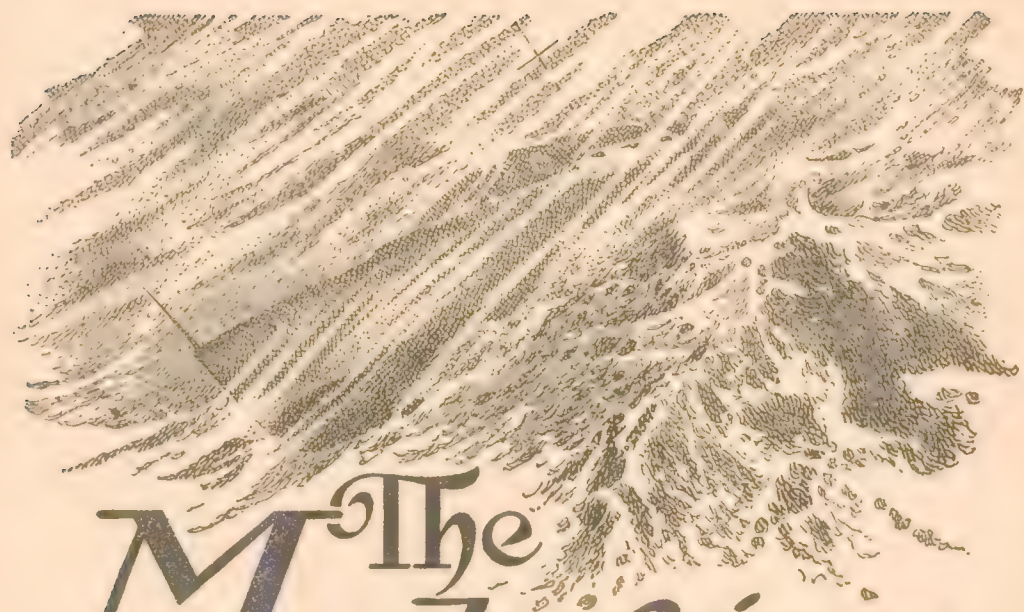
His eyes went to the face of his little school-teacher and clung there adoringly.

THE END.



A CARPENTER FOR FUN

AT one time or another every real boy wants to be a carpenter, drive nails, and build things. Rush La Motte Holland, the Washington lawyer, who has passed his sixtieth birthday, has never got over that boyhood desire. In the basement of the apartment house in which he resides he has a splendidly fitted-up shop where he does very fine cabinet work at night. It is his hobby. Mr. Holland was assistant attorney general of the United States from 1921 until 1925.



The *Masterpiece* By *Karl W. Detzer*

Author of "Out Oars!" "Squatter's Rights," Etc.

Johann, a master builder of beautiful, strong boats, was terribly disappointed when his only son abandoned the trade to become a fisherman. But Johann saw light.

JOHANN laid down the hammer unwillingly when his wife called.

Three steps from the workbench, while he wiped his fingers on a piece of waste, he turned and looked back hungrily at his unfinished task. He would prefer not to leave it.

"Well, Katie?" he finally asked. His voice was flat. To himself he added, without moving his lips: "She's getting too old to be so damn pretty."

Johann Christopherson said many things to himself that way. And few things to any one else. His neighbors considered him dull, he spoke so rarely. "Off" was the word some of them used. His thin lips had a habit of smiling for no apparent reason, or else he glowered when there was naught to glower about.

"Supper," his wife said. "You're late again, Johann."

The man nodded. He was sorry she had needed to come after him. He had intended to get home on time to-night. There was the matter regarding John; he'd meant to talk to John before supper. He stuffed the wad of waste absentmindedly into his pocket and put on his coat. He must be stern with John this time.

Sternness was distasteful to him. He stooped to the floor, picked up John's saw and the polished-steel square from where they had lain all afternoon in a heap of oak chips, and hung them gently in place on the wall.

"No way to treat good tools," he told himself.

"All right, Katie," he said aloud.

His wife had gone. She was striding over the dune, a tall woman—with the look of a ship about her, as Johann always thought, a fair ship of the old days of sail. Johann shrugged his round shoulders as he followed the trail of her feet in the soft, white sand.

It was twenty-five years since he had taken the radiant Katie Nelson for wife. Neither had changed a great deal since the wedding. Johann was a close-knit, sober-faced man of fifty, now, with scanty gray hair in ringlets and a dusty complexion.

Young John resembled him in appearance. It had disappointed Johann to discover that John, at twenty-two, showed nothing at all of Katie's handsome face or skin. He had inherited her hard common sense, though. Perhaps that explained the present trouble.

He passed the boy on the back porch of the house without speaking. But when he had taken his face from the rough towel he returned to him.

"You didn't come back this afternoon," the father said. It was not an accusation. But his voice conveyed no acceptance of the fact.

"Hurry, men." This was Katie, a little anxious, as if she wished to delay the conversation.

The son followed the father into the kitchen. They said no more while they ate. The silence was interrupted only by the tap of knife and fork on crockery. When the meal was over, Johann repeated his statement:

"You didn't come back."

The boy did not look up as he answered. But his voice was defiant:

"I'm not coming back. I quit. I got me a job."

"Oh!"

"I can't work for you!" Young John stood up wrathfully. "I can't! I know I cut that piece of oak too short to-day. How could I help it? It just came short! I don't have to work for

you! I'm my own skipper; if I want to fish, I got the right!"

Johann listened quietly. He made no immediate comment. It was the third time young John had left his father's shop. Johann stared uneasily at the floor, while his ears rang with a sound like wind in taut halyards. It would not do to let John see what he felt. But he could not be stern. Fish! His son! Fish, if he wants! There was finality in the boy's voice.

This was the end. The end of all the splendid promises he had made himself, made Katie, through twenty years. The end of his most cherished dream, his most splendid illusion. His son, his only son, a fisherman!

He was of the sea, right enough. Katie's father had served as mate on a pot-bellied windjammer out of Bergen before he forsook the oceans for the lure of the Great Lakes. Johann had grown up in the same atmosphere. Only he had not loved it as Katie's father had. The sea he recognized was a sea of temper and cold wrath, a force to be conquered, like poverty, age, and death. And like all three, he added to himself, it was ever victorious at last.

He had stayed ashore, when it was time for him to go to work. Not because he was afraid. Young John and Katie both knew that it wasn't fear that put a hammer in his hands. He had tried to tell Katie once how it was. He had used the word "beauty," and she hadn't understood. He had told her, awkwardly, that beauty was his only god, and she had looked shocked. Nothing to be shocked about. He felt a splendid satisfaction, himself. Let others sail out to the Banks, run down the horizon with steam or gas or canvas, or dedicate themselves to the thankless heroism of saving lives on treacherous coasts. Johann Christopherson had his own exalted part to play ashore. In the endless warfare of strong men against the mightier elements, he had

his own tasks to perform, his own precise tactics and strategy.

He was a boat builder.

On all the rocky lengths of the fishing coast there was not one pair of hands to match his. His mates in the village admitted that. He builded stanch craft and put beauty in their utilitarian lines; the boats from Johann's shop were swift, faithful, a match for any weather, and good to look upon. Johann never told his neighbors how he did it. Why bother? They wouldn't understand. Not even Katie could grasp it—how, months before the first rib was bent, his mind had conjured another lovely image, a rich model of exquisite proportions and elemental power, a dream for his dexterous fingers to fashion in wood and iron. He had only one other dream. It was that young John some day should help him build a masterpiece.

But John was awkward with tools. His fingers had no skill. He couldn't handle saw, chisel, or drawknife. He tried; he had striven doggedly to hew rib or shape keel. He always failed. And now he had given up.

"I'm going fishing," he repeated, "with Joe Arms."

"I wasn't aimin' to be stiff with you this morning, John," he protested. "I just said you cut that rib too short."

"Sure, I know it. I can't cut. I can't even nail. I don't blame *you*. Look at my hands!"

Johann looked helplessly. John's hands always shocked him. Even in repose they were awkward.

Johann found his tobacco pouch and stuffed his pipe bowl. He held his fingers firm as he struck the match.

"It's a poor boat Arms has got," he said at length.

"Not much boat," his son agreed; "not like you build. Arms knows it; said so to-day. But he'll pay me good money—eighteen a week to start. And I *can* fish."

"H'm," said his father. He arose uncomfortably. He wanted to mention the masterpiece just once. After looking at his son he went to bed without speaking.

From the door of his workshop on the beach, Johann watched Joe Arms' boat put out to lake next morning, with young John leaning on the cabin, ankles gripped to the tiller. In the afternoon he saw the boy drive safely to port through a sharp summer squall, guiding the boat skillfully, looking rather gallant in his yellow oilskins.

Johann's questions about the catch John answered only in monosyllables. And before he was many weeks afloat he developed a reticence of speech not unlike his father's. But from other fishermen Johann heard that the boy was becoming a good sailor.

"He's got the knack," they'd say.

"Anybody'll take him partners in two-three year, if he wants."

Old Johann came to brood over that word "knack." A knack for sailing but not for building boats. A knack for hauling up nets, but no love of beauty. No skill in fashioning clean, stanch planks into hulls that would ride water soundly—and something more: gracefully. The rib John cut short his last day in the shop belonged in the new government mail boat. Post-office inspectors had looked only once at the old, topheavy craft in which Adolphe Svensen carried the mail to Shadow Island, sixteen miles off the coast. Johann had had no competition for the job of building the new one. Forty-eight feet over all, she was to be—a stanch, dirty-weather craft, fit to crush ice floes in winter or skim easily with light mail sacks during midsummer calms.

Johann worked slowly on the frame. He promised nothing, set no date for completion. Svensen no longer tried to hurry him. But alternate days, on his way to Shadow Island, he steered

past Johann's workshop door and saw the new hull taking shape. He saw Johann staring at the distant horizon many times, contemplating things as they might have been. Grief over John's desertion took on edge, instead of losing it, as the days went by. If only John had helped him! Had he worked dutifully and ably here in the shop, what might they not have built together? Well, dreams are queer, like the white foam among the rocks.

At least, this was a good boat. Johann found satisfaction in that. As he set the keel, steamed and bent ribs, and drew the planking snugly over them, there still lived in his heart some small ember of satisfaction. He had failed with his son; aye, failed. But this boat—was there ever a prettier? She was not the masterpiece. No. Yet were ever the shoulders of any craft more soundly fashioned, more capable of rising from the most crushing blow angry water could give? It was early September when he fitted the decks and built up the small house over the engine compartment. October found the last coat of paint drying. She would be ready for the winter run, all right. Even old Svensen admitted it.

Speechless, for he was not given to uttering praise, the mail carrier had watched the progress. He was an old man; too old to risk the winter trips.

"He'll sink some day," Katie predicted.

"Aye," Johann agreed, "aye, they all do." To himself he added: "Because they've poor boats."

"It's the ugly ones sink first," he said aloud.

The men of the fishing fleet, young John among them, gave a rough hand at the ceremony when the new boat was launched. They praised her heartily, swore that never had so pretty a hull kissed the water. Johann, who stood in the shop door smoking his

pipe, nodded, but said nothing. He knew she was a good boat. But she wasn't his masterpiece. He might never build that masterpiece now. Not without John's help.

Six times in the next three days Johann pumped out the water. The fourth day the seams had swelled tight. Not a bucket of seepage had passed in the night. She was ready, if the motor worked. About that, about any engine, Johann never could feel sure. He was not so clever at tuning engines as he was at shaping a fan-tailed stern. This one seemed all right. A week he experimented, until, on Sunday, he was satisfied.

Repeatedly, while his neighbors sat devoutly in church, he turned the crank, until the great four-cylinder motor set up a heavy, growling rhythm that pleased even his uncompromising ears. He repeated the tests Monday.

"She is finished," he said at length. And, climbing out to the bow, he sat down on an empty nail keg, stuffed his pipe, and there, reflectively, waited for Svensen to claim the finished product.

The fishing fleet had gone out to the windward channel that morning. Every day they were bringing home heavy lifts. Summer hung doggedly to the lakes. Frosts were light; only occasionally did snow flurries dim the horizon, and the sun shone with tireless vehemence. Johann saw the worn-out craft of Joe Arms grunt determinedly into port behind the others—a gray, weathered veteran, with panting engine, patched deadlights, and ugly upper workings. His son stood at the tiller, steering thoughtfully.

Old Johann squinted his eyes as he stared at the boy. He'd had few words with him of late, though they had been pleasant enough—Katie had seen to that. But what was there to talk to him about? The boy had deserted him. He was a poor Christopherson. A Christopherson without pride.

"It's a poor man ships aboard a thing like that," he muttered.

His eyes traveled from the disgraceful little vessel on which young John had cast his lot to the trim, white splendor of the new mail boat. The sight stirred lost illusions in him, and he escaped below. At least, with this he was satisfied. And his hands could build other boats just as good. He spoke without moving his lips.

"If only the boy had turned out right! A poor sailorman and a poor craftsman!"

He was watching through a porthole when the incoming engine balked, just where the current and the roll of the light surf met. Ground swell threatened the craft. Joe Arms was spinning the crank below in the cabin. John, on the cramped deck aft, gripped the tiller between his feet, yanked it to starboard, dodged the cedar cribs, and saved the boat. Fishermen on the shore nodded their heads.

"Good sailor, that boy," they commented. "Good job he done there."

Johann heard them, from where he watched by the open porthole. He saw white water stir up behind the boat, and while the motor choked and threatened, observed the ease with which his son drove the fish boat home to her berth. John's hands didn't seem so awkward as usual. He hadn't cut a rib too short that time!

"He handled it nice," his father grunted.

He stooped down, a little wearily, and flattened the head of a protruding copper nail. His searching eyes could discover nothing more to do on the new craft. He padlocked its cabin and, returning to the workshop, methodically swept out the last dust of shavings.

John was talking excitedly when Johann opened the kitchen door. He was telling his mother of the difficulty with which Arms had made the harbor. The narrative lagged when the boat

builder entered. But Katie, who came of sailing stock, prepared the supper with a satisfied glow on her face. Johann observed it approvingly; Katie was still pretty. He glanced across at his son. The boy looked like him; but he couldn't build boats.

"You made port right well," Johann said unexpectedly.

It was blowing next morning at seven when Johann plowed through the sand to his shop. Threat of spirited winds hung in the sky. But the boats had gone out. Only Joe Arms' craft, of all the fleet, pitched idly at the dock. At seven thirty young John poled a skiff to the workshop door.

"Hello," he said.

Johann grunted and went on wiping the cabin rails with a piece of soft white cloth. He was surprised by the visit. It was the first time John had entered the shop since the day he quit. Was he ready to come back? Johann put down the cloth at length and stared out to the lake.

"Blow likely," he commented. Then: "Why you not out?"

"Broken pin," John answered. "Joe's gone to the blacksmith." He waited. He sensed that his father knew this was not all he had come to tell. "Svensen's on the way over," he said finally. He jabbed a thumb toward the lake. "I see him from the hilltop. Think he'll take the new boat?"

"She's ready," Johann answered.

Young John moved uncomfortably. He felt the reluctance in his father's voice, reluctance to give up the beautiful object he had built. It occurred to John for the first time that such might always be the case. A boat belonged forever to the man who built her, no matter how good a sailor bought her. He picked up the cloth which his father had dropped and began automatically to polish brass.

"Wind coming," he remarked.

Johann continued to stare at the open

lake. On the distant black surface he detected a gray speck that he knew was the old Shadow Island mail boat running for port. Directly behind her a glowering cloud with saffron edges lay close upon the water.

"Aye, wind," he admitted. "It'll overhaul Adolphe afore he's halfway in." His eyes returned to the disabled fish boat across the harbor. "It's a poor craft," he said bluntly. "Pin broke? H'm. Poor craft."

The black cloud rolled its yellowish edges nearer. Shreds of mist stood out atop it, rumpling in the wind, like Johann's gray hair. Near shore the lay turned ocher; farther out it was a deep, poisonous green. John ran to the end of the cedar-pole cribs. The fish boats were lifting nets under the shelter of Shadow Island this morning. The storm must already be upon them. But there was no sign of their return across the water. Only the mail boat, an enlarging gray speck, neared port. He ran back to his father. The cloud had churned closer in the minute. Its bulging brows were directly overhead.

"Fish boats must've took refuge at Shadow Island," John said. "Don't see them nowhere. Lots o' wind up there."

"Um," Johann answered.

The storm struck like an oaken club. Gray-headed clouds rolled close to the earth; lake water trembled and flung loose from the surface; a mighty below of wind swept across the beach, and the air chilled. Snow slanted down. For three minutes it blinded Johann's eyes. Then the atmosphere cleared, as if by an evil miracle.

"Svensen's in trouble," Johann shouted. The wind jerked away his words.

John, squinting his eyes, peered lakeward. The gray speck was tumbling in the squall. He saw it turn broadside to the wind.

"She's not steering," he cried back, "not steering!"

"Rudder broke, maybe?"

The two stood motionless. Another burst of snow blinded them. The air darkened. The black cloud spread out to the four corners of the horizon, soaking up light like a blotter. Again, momentarily, the snow withdrew.

They saw that the mail boat had drifted southward.

"Needs a hand," said Johann. He looked at his son. The boy's blue eyes were on Joe Arms' impotent craft. "Needs a hand," Johann repeated.

High waves, running in wild disorder, charged up the harbor. Spray broke across the guarding cribs at the entrance. Wind pounded mercilessly upon water and land.

"Will she run?" asked John. He pointed to the new mail boat.

"I made her," his father replied, "and the gas tank's full."

Without further words the two men climbed down. Johann waited on deck to see which job his son would choose. John did not hesitate. He chose to steer the boat. Casting off the forward line, he crawled back nimbly along the coaming, gripped the rail atop the cabin, and clamped his ankles about the tiller. Johann ducked his bent shoulders into the engine compartment. There was a sputter as the motor caught. Then a rhythmic grumble.

A bell rattled overhead. Johann's fingers, obeying the command, drew back the polished-steel clutch. He spoke without moving his lips.

"The boy'll handle her right," he said.

The boat faced into the wind, high-handedly, as if pulled by sail. Lakeward bound.

"He made her," said Johann's son. "She'll do it."

Down in the cabin Johann felt the tough claws of the first rollers bite upon the bow, braced himself for the vigorous and eccentric antics of the groundswell. His new creation rolled stub-

bornly through them. Overhead, the wind screamed a mighty threat. Below, enraged waters kicked at planks and keel. The engine running smoothly, Johann crawled up to the deck.

The harassed lake tore past in strings of foam. Spindrift pelted overside. Johann clung to the grip rails while his son towered above him, stern faced, glowering into the wind. The boy did not move his head. The boat tumbled senselessly. Astern, the wake churned white, and the gray fishing town dropped behind.

Great flakes of snow pelted into Johann's squinting eyes. He retreated to the cabin. Ten minutes—twelve—fifteen. He crawled forward across the heaving floor and peered through a deadlight. The island mail boat was invisible at first. Then he saw it, not a quarter of a mile ahead, rising from a trough between two great waves.

There was no one at her tiller. The stern deck, buffeted by vehement breakers, lay empty. Unsteered, waterlogged, old Adolphe's old craft swam awkwardly. Her deck was empty.

Johann wiped perspiration from his face. She was done, that old trap of Adolphe's! But, ah! was this a good one that had been built to take her place? Without flinching, she took the battering that tall waves gave her, buried her nose doggedly, and lifted it spiritedly, shaking off green water. Spiritedly she advanced, until only a hundred yards lay between the craft. Then Johann, through the companion, saw John's feet shift slightly on the jerking tiller. He saw his son's cool, hard face lean down, saw his mouth open to speak; but the roar of wind and water and the rumble of the engine overwhelmed his voice. Johann crawled back. With his ear close to John's, he made out the words:

"Running into it—against it! I'll take over a line! He's got a passenger!"

Fifty yards. Young John's jaw was like cordwood; tight, like Johann's own.

"I'll run her up; then you hold her!" he commanded.

His father, leaning through the opening in the stern of the cabin, gripped the end of the tiller until his thin hands bled. Awkward, his hands—unaccustomed to a tiller. Awkward as John's own, back there at the shop.

The boat reared like an unruly horse. She knew, eh? Knew the control at her head had changed? Old Johann gripped savagely. He saw John's eyes open wide. And his mouth. The boy was shouting. But saying what? Johann twisted an inch about. He could see nothing of the old mail boat. But on his son's face he recognized the reflection of disaster. Spray clouded the portholes. John was shouting aloud, snatches of his voice breaking through the fury of the wind.

He was sprawling on the heaving deck when Johann dared glance again. Then he staggered up with a coil of light line on his arm. The father trembled as the other poised on the rail and leaped. He made sure of the engine; then, still holding the tiller, tumbled up to deck to watch his son.

Adolphe Svensen's condemned boat lay on her side, not three fathoms off. Her rail dipped under. Water rushed in. She was sinking. And the figure clawing a way out of the cabin was a woman. Of Adolphe there was no sign. A great wave hurled up a wall between the two craft. They threatened to smash each other as they plunged.

Johann searched the tumult for his son. Ten seconds—fifteen—— He must have dived deep! The older man was shivering, while he wiped sweat from his cold face, when the boy came up. He arose easily from tormented water, the line still gripped tight, and pushed toward the sinking craft.

Johann stared. Could it be John swimming like that? John, thrown high by another wave, who gripped the submerged deck of Svensen's boat, crawled up, braced with one foot, and pulled on the line? The two hulls rolled nearer, drew apart, again smashed one toward another. The sinking craft tumbled heavily in every thundering wave. Her proud white successor rode high over the top of each, dropped gracefully between their ridges, and lifted again with ease.

It was a woman John dragged to the slanting bow—a badly frightened woman. Johann gripped the tiller and swore. Faith, and she had a right to be frightened! What kind of rotten boat was that? It would go down in three minutes—two minutes—one! He saw a second woman totter up from the doomed cabin, a bundle of blankets in her arms. And John was signaling.

The two boats reared together, while Johann blinked snow from his eyes. He could make no sense of what John was doing. The boy was pulling steadily, uninterruptedly, on the tightening rope, while maniac waves pulled the stronger craft away, mightier winds pushed it back.

The two vessels met with a crash and rebounded. A crying woman crawled to Johann's feet. She still held blankets. But how had she got aboard? Jumped? He pushed her below into the engine room.

The boats crashed again. The second woman sprawled on the deck. Johann had seen what happened this time. John, with more strength than his father ever had possessed, had flung her aboard at just the right moment.

"Yourself, lad!" Johann bellowed. "Be savin' of yourself!"

Only one corner of the tipsy cabin thrust above the waves. A charging roller clawed over it, and it disappeared.

"Yourself!" Johann shouted.

John was dragging his body through the water, hand over cold hand, along his rope. He shook his head when his father leaned down to help him. He pulled himself up by the icy rail, shook lake water out of his eyes, pushed past his father, and stepped across the tiller.

"Speed up the engine," he commanded.

He was down oiling the engine, when the village pushed into sight through squalls of snow. The jarring antics of breakers ceased. A sudden bucking motion told Johann that they were riding the ground swell between the cedar cribs. He gripped the clutch. John, on deck, jangled the bell for half speed. They were safe inside. Again the bell. Reverse. Johann pushed down on the lever. He felt the caress of cedar pil-ing. Ropes were made fast. The engine stopped. Above the howl of storm he made out the voices of men on the wharf.

"You can get out now, ladies," Johann said.

Townsmen asked questions excitedly in the nearest fish shanty. The two women answered hysterically. Svensen was dead. Aye, that was right. His hands had lost their grip. He'd been blown overboard by the first squall.


At home, he kissed Katie on the cheek before he took off his icy coat. Her skin glowed pink. She had been crying, he guessed; crying for fear they wouldn't make port. But, ah, wasn't she pretty! Married twenty-five years and still so pretty! He was rich, to possess a wife who looked like Katie, and, down there in the harbor, a splendid boat!

His masterpiece? No, no! Young John was his father's masterpiece.

"Damn good boy!" Johann told himself.

Another Karl W. Detzer story will appear in an early issue.

The White Chip



By
**William
Pinkney Lawson**

Author of "The Last Chance Mine," "Romance Trail," Etc,

Percy Gryce not only wouldn't enlist, but he was actually a draft-dodger. It took one of the strangest experiences ever to bring him around, and make his girl happy.

PRIOR to America's entry into the war, Sally had been Percy's, admittedly; after said entry, it dawned on the disgruntled youth that he had acquired a rival in the A. E. F.—not any individual soldier, but the whole army. Even this Percy might have stood for, with reservations; but as time passed and her lover consistently neglected to leave for some training camp or other, Sally began to put well-meant but awkward inquiries. What was his class? How had they happened to overlook him? Why, finally, didn't he enlist?

The youth might have enlightened her by replying truthfully that he was still at large because he had refrained from registering. As for enlistment—laughter! Was he a goof, an utter

ninny? This question, being purely rhetorical, included its own answer.

Of course he didn't put it just that way. He didn't, as a matter of record, vouchsafe Sally any real answer, at all. He merely talked round and about the subject, implying diplomatically that the draft board was saving him up for a crisis—the spring drive, perhaps. Then they would call on him. Who was he to disrupt their strategy by premature enrollment?

There was a notable quarrel, a sharp collision of viewpoints. A little later Percy learned, to his dismay, that discreet inquiries concerning his war status had been set on foot. They were closing in on him, he feared.

Ensued a brief but poignant struggle between desire and discretion, in which

the latter won. Percy applied for extended leave from the bank and gave out that he had been called to New York, hinting at a "mission." Sally sniffed when told the news, but looked more cheerful than for weeks past. They kissed at the station when he left.

The lobby of the McAlton Hotel was crowded, mostly by men in uniform, their mothers, wives, and sweethearts. Percy, clad in a neat-fitting suit of blue serge, sat in a comfortable lounge chair and scowled at the throng. He hoped to remain in the metropolis for a considerable period, but he was already bored by inaction, though he had not been here a week. He would have to get some sort of job, he told himself. He was safe enough, he was convinced, even under his own name.

He had written Sally promptly, hinting at mysterious activities. He had her reply in his pocket at the moment, but it wasn't hard to restrain his eagerness to reread the letter. It had given him a distinctly queer feeling, as a matter of fact, when he read it the first time—particularly where she said:

Some of the boys are home on leave. Their uniforms are lovely. I do so want to see you in yours. When you're through with the mission you're on—intelligence work, isn't it?—do you suppose they'll let you be an officer? Oh, I so want to be proud of you, Percy!

The boy's morose eyes dwelt with scorn on the khaki-clad men about him. Lovely uniforms—lovely hell! He wasn't envious, naturally. These lunatics had become unbalanced through a species of self-induced hysteria. He, Percy Gryce, was sane. But suddenly he found himself quite lonesome. He ground his teeth bitterly, and a look of misery came in his eyes.

His grimace of pain went not wholly unnoticed. Contrary to his firmly held belief, he was of major interest to at least one other person in the crowded

lobby. A stocky gentleman in a brown derby, with close-set eyes and a rather violent jaw, was inspecting the youth narrowly, the while leaning an elbow on the hotel desk and conversing in guarded tones with an anæmic room clerk.

"That's the bird all right, Freddie! Slim build, medium height, brown eyes and hair. Say, ain't he been on a tear? Lookit his eyes! When the lower lids drag down that way, so't the white shows—good night! I'll bet for all he's settin' there so still, he's not more'n a jump ahead of the jimmies!"

The clerk eyed the suspect dubiously.

"He ain't had a drink since he came in, Bill!"

"Got it in his room!" countered his companion scornfully.

"Yeah?"

"Yeah."

There was the ring of conviction in the stocky man's assurance, though it was born of something short of exact knowledge.

The clerk hesitated.

"We can't afford to make any mistakes, Bill," he persisted. "There's prob'ly more than one Percy Gryce in the world."

"Not like this one, there ain't! He's like this here lonesome wolf I seen at the pitchers the other night—only he ain't a wolf, he's a prize souse. I'd like to have what he's cost his gov'nor. Wine, whisky, an' beer—them's his little failin's. He's been round town a week or better, an' he's about due. Lookit him!"

There seemed some point to the request. The youth was obviously suffering. His face was drawn, his eyes sunken. A twitch of pain crossed his pale face.

The clerk, staring in a curious blend of superciliousness, envy, and admiration, sighed and gave in.

"Take him," he said resignedly, "but no rough work, mind!"

"Watch me!" begged the stocky man, and moved off through the press.

"Mr. Percy Gryce?"

The boy started sharply, little beads of moisture appearing on his forehead. Had they got him at last?

He turned wild eyes to the big man bending over him. But the man showed no hostile symptoms—quite the reverse. His heavy features were creased in a smile, his huge hand was extended in a friendly gesture.

Percy with a gulp took the big hand and admitted his identity; he didn't know what else to do.

"Guess you're surprised to see me!" hazarded the stranger jovially, as he sank into a convenient chair.

The youth nodded. That was an easy one to answer.

"James G. Belmore," announced the first speaker. "Old friend of your dad's. Saw him a while back and promised to look out for you when I come to town. Looks like luck, running across you, first crack outa the box!"

Percy breathed more easily. The stranger had undoubtedly confused him with some other of his name; a harmless error, easily rectified. Nothing to worry about, as long as Mr. Belmore was unconnected with draft matters.

The boy jumped nervously as a long, black cigar appeared under his nose, its mate already sticking from his new friend's mouth. "Have one, bub?"

"I never smoke, thank you!" declined Percy.

An odd, ironic gleam lit Mr. Belmore's small eyes. He remarked somewhat irrelevantly:

"Fine gentleman, your dad! There ain't anything, hardly, I wouldn't do for him an' his!"

Percy tactfully refrained from comment. His father, a clergyman in the small town he hailed from, would never have chosen the breezy James G. for an acquaintance. For one thing,

the elder Gryce abhorred gold teeth, and Mr. Belmore displayed more than one glittering molar when he smiled. For another thing, the reverend was something of a purist in the matter of the spoken word.

A hoarse whisper interrupted Percy's musings.

"Y'look bad, my boy!"

His companion had leaned forward confidentially and laid a large hand on Percy's knee.

"Hope y'don't mind my mentionin' it, sonny; but, between pals, y'look tough—dam' tough!"

Percy withdrew his knee.

"I'm all right," he asserted shortly.

Mr. Belmore laughed, as if he shared a joke.

"Sure you're all right! Who says you ain't? But a snifter wouldn't go so bad, would it?"

Percy flushed and said stiffly:

"I never touch alcohol, Mr. Belmore!"

For a moment he feared the stocky man had suffered some kind of seizure. His face became suffused, his eyes bulged; he choked and cleared his throat harshly, wiping his moist forehead on a large handkerchief with red dots. After a bit he rallied.

"I'm pro'hibition, myself, as a gen'ral thing. But look here, maybe a drive through the park wouldn't do you no harm. Fresh air, trees—all that. What say, brother?"

Percy, upon brief consideration, said yes. It would be a change anyhow—almost an adventure. And while he was his father's son to the extent that he would not have chosen the big stranger as a car comrade voluntarily, he was fair-minded enough to concede that a drive in the other's company might prove less wearing than the ennui which had weighted him down ere his new friend came in sight.

He rose, accompanying the big-hearted Mr. Belmore across the lobby

and out of the hotel. A taxi stood at the curb. With a whispered direction to the driver, his benefactor followed young Percy into the cab and slammed the door shut.

Doctor Cairns sat in his austere office, checking up with a thin frown of concentration on business for the day. Since morning, he discovered, his sanitarium had become richer by two drug addicts, one fractured leg, a cancer case, and three alcoholics. He rubbed dry hands together briskly. Hardly a room was vacant—if one excepted the luxurious apartment reserved by, and sacred to the money of, Arthur G. Gryce, the coal magnate.

The good doctor sighed as he considered this untenanted nest. For a week it had been kept ready, swept and dusted, warm and softly lighted, spotless sheets turned back invitingly against the counterpane. Yet its destined occupant, a youth given to periodic dissipation, still managed to elude emissaries set upon his trail. Of course the boy's father would pay, that went without saying; but the physician abhorred waste. And suppose—merely suppose—he should fail, after all, to locate the missing patient!

He frowned, lifting a telegram from the desk with slender, capable-looking fingers.

My son Percy is on a spree in New York. Get hold of him as quickly as you can. Try hotels and night clubs. Keep him under observation till he is straightened out. Spare no expense.
A. G. GRyce.

Well, there was the doctor's warrant. And he had acted promptly. Men had been sent to find the boy without delay. Even McCarthy, his invaluable strong-arm male nurse, had neglected his proper duties to flit from hotel to hotel, from night club to night club—without appreciable result. Even as the doctor listened, a heavy footfall sounded in the carpeted corridor.

The doctor stared expectantly toward the door, which opened to admit McCarthy, a stocky man with close-set eyes and a brown derby hat. His face was flushed, his collar wilted, but triumph entered with him.

"I got him!" he announced laconically, throwing himself into a chair.

The doctor's brow cleared. He indulged in a thrifty smile.

"I am gratified," he murmured. "How—ah—how is the young man? Bad?"

A puzzled look overspread the big man's face.

"Honest, doc, you wouldn't know he'd ever had a drink in his life—except for his eyes and that drawed look they get around the gills!"

The doctor betrayed surprise, and a trace of what in other circumstances might have been construed as disappointment.

"You don't say? Yet we have it on his father's authority that the young man has been—ah—indulging. We must take care of him. Any indications of delirium?"

"He told me he never smoked nor drank," suggested McCarthy hopefully.

The doctor frowned.

"I think," he said after a moment's rumination, "we'll try the hyoscine treatment. Aside from the drug's sedative effect, the hallucinations induced often exert a deterrent effect on the confirmed alcoholic—through suggestion."

"You know it!" assented the nurse with enthusiasm. "Remember that Travis kid was here last month? Thought we'd put him to bed with a coupla lepers. I'll bet he lays off booze for a while!"

"A very successful case!" murmured the doctor pleasantly. "But to return to young Gryce. He was tractable, I trust?"

Once more the puzzled look came into McCarthy's eyes.

"He was an' he wasn't, if you get what I mean. Didn't act uppish or anything; but he wouldn't pal worth a cent, either. Wouldn't even take a drink, like I told you. Of course I was thinkin' of slippin' a little dope in the shot, if he'd fell for my line. But nix—he side-stepped. So I had to ballyhoo him into a cab and give it to him in the arm. But, say, I couldn't figure that teetotaler gag a-tall!"

The doctor waved a deprecatory hand.

"No matter. So long as you brought him here quietly. You made the injection adequate?"

"He's dead to the world, all right. Miss Palen's got him in charge. He's safe."

Doctor Cairn's bony face expressed satisfaction.

"Better get some sleep now, McCarthy. Your work has been—ah—excellent!"

Percy awoke in bed, in a pair of lilac pajamas he couldn't remember ever having worn before. At the same time he was aware of a pleasant-faced young woman in white who moved soft-footed about the room—a strange room, but a nice one.

The young woman smiled when he stirred.

"You're awake. That's good."

He agreed, for politeness' sake, though he had doubts on the point. He didn't feel good, anyway—not very good. He felt sort of queer. His head buzzed, and it was hard to focus his eyes, so as to see clearly. Had he looked in a glass he would have discovered that the pupils of his eyes had become distended until they were practically coextensive with the iris. But the room had no mirror.

The nurse smiled again, this time at the boy's perplexed expression. Glancing at a small wrist watch, she seated herself by the bed and took Percy's hand in hers.

Her matter-of-fact assumption of a fairly intimate relationship brought home to Percy abruptly the anomaly of his position.

"Where am I?" he inquired. "What's happened?"

"You've had a nervous breakdown!" returned his companion cheerily. "We're going to take good care of you. I'm Miss Palen, the night nurse. Don't worry; everything will be all right!"

For the second time doubt of her accuracy assailed the boy's mind, but he refrained from argument. He was conscious of a curious languor, as if nothing mattered very much. He wondered idly whether Sally or his people had been notified; then his thoughts became pleasantly engaged in puzzling out an intricate design on the ceiling, a design etched in lines of wavering pink fire.

He was roused from this occupation by a faint gnawing sound, like that made by a rat in the woodwork. Frowning at the disturbance, he glanced toward the sound—and sat up sharply, shocked by what he saw. It was Miss Palen; but how changed! She sat in the chair by the door, bolt upright, gazing at him pensively and chewing a policeman's nightstick with apparent relish. Her teeth on the hard wood made the sound that had drawn his eyes.

"Wha—what's the big idea?" demanded the patient hastily.

She made no reply. She had on a policeman's blue coat, he saw now, with brass buttons. But the sleeves of the coat were quarter length, and black gloves without fingers covered her arms to the elbow. And the helmet she wore was odd—a huge, hairy affair like those worn by the Death's Head Hussars, bearing their emblem.

A ludicrous costume. But Percy did not laugh. A wave of dread rolled over him. He thought, cravenly, of

burying his head beneath the bed-clothes; but a light tapping sound on the window by the bed caught his attention. He turned, staring fearfully. A white face was pressed against the glass, anxious eyes looked into his—the face, the eyes of Sally Ward!

Her lips moved, but he could hear no sound. She turned slowly from the window, looking back, beckoning him urgently. Quickly he leaped out of bed and in two steps reached the window. As he raised the sash and vaulted through, a shrill cry came from the nurse he had eluded. With no backward look, exulting in escape, he sped on bare feet across a grassy lawn.

Trees loomed here and there, clumps of broad-leaved shrubbery grew between. Percy came to a low wall beyond which ran a straight road lit by moonlight through a mist. The road ran at right angles to the course he had pursued. He scanned its pale length eagerly. There was a shadow far to the left, where the road lost itself in the embrace of night.

The shadow moved, took on character. A wrathlike column worked slowly into sight, creeping like a dark snake into the lane of soft illumination. It neared. Marching soldiers—a myriad of them! In utter silence, with grimy clothes and torn flags, in a shifting cloud that clung and eddied like the smoke of battle, they marched on.

It was strange there was no sound. Bands were there; buglers with lips to ghostly horns, drummers with sticks which beat a swift and soundless roll on phantom drums, fifers whose eerie instruments were noiseless as the wings of night. And soldiers, and again soldiers, with footsteps like the voiceless wind, soft as dewfall, as empty of all echo as the grave.

Infantry in column of fours, swinging by with the free doughboy stride. Artillery, caissons bumping, guns covered, outriders swaying easily to the

motion of their mounts. Cavalry, with sabers and shining spears, pennons drooping idly on their staffs. And all so silent, marching through the drifting pall like an army of the dead.

The watcher shivered at that thought. And, as if also moved by a thought, the mist fled away. With terror the boy saw that each soldier's face was a skull, each bony hand bare of flesh. The soldiers' clothes hung loosely upon them, and were moldy and stained with earth. Yet they marched straight, proudly striding; they held their heads erect.

The boy was trembling, not altogether from the cold. He became conscious of a presence—Sally was beside him! But Sally somehow glorified, a symbol of the spirit that shone from her eyes. Her gaze was fixed on the long column that marched from night into night again, without a sound to mark its phantom going.

Her eyes looked somber as she turned them on Percy.

"The honorable dead," she murmured, "have returned to shame us who thrive on their distress!"

Percy would have answered; but his lips were stiff, and words would not come. There was one word, he knew, that would have justified him. He could not think of it.

"Sanity—san——" he stammered.

The girl's face was scornful.

"You are so shrewd, so sharp-eyed, that you miss the light by which you see! Have you denied your heart, less it should teach you honor?"

It seemed to Percy, then, that shame enveloped him like a shirt of fire. His eyes were opened magically; he saw clearly. For the first time, it seemed, he saw himself in right perspective to the world outside of his own mind; and the sight daunted him. He had thought himself marked out, excepted from the ruck; but he was only a white chip staked by fate in the great game,

The cautious ordering of his life, which he had once thought sensible, seemed absurd. He was like a blind beggar sorting rags, while overhead the clouds trailed golden garments for his taking. He had gained safety; of a sort. But what had he missed? Vision, high emotion, the generous simplicity of soul that reckes not first of self. He had been blinkered by self-love, which he had called, as if it had been a god, "Sanity."

The rear guard of the spectral host was passing. A scarecrow figure turned, beckoned with fleshless hand. Others stopped, the host stopped, marking time. Flags were raised, arms waved, voiceless shouts issued from throats withered long since. Yet it was as if Percy heard a cheering—wild, exultant, filling earth and sky with its triumphant clamor.

His heart beat loud in his ears. These were his countrymen, slain on the field of honor. They were safe now, safer than was he. They would live longer than he—a long as gratitude endured. They were not to be pitied; but to be envied, to be emulated.

Sally's voice sounded clear and thrilling as a trumpet call.

"Why are you not there, in that high company?"

"I didn't know!" he muttered. "I didn't understand!"

Flame leaped from Sally's eyes; her face was radiant.

She pointed to the marchers, disappearing down the moonlit road.

"It's not too late!" he heard.

The wind took the phrase to his ears, for he had leaped the low wall in front, was racing to overtake the column, dimly seen.

The doctor and his male nurse, McCarthy, were discussing the patient who had been discharged that morning.

"A very successful case," the doctor

was saying. "Though that first night, when he imagined he had escaped——"

McCarthy grinned.

"Like to know what he saw—or thought he saw! Miss Palen said he wouldn't come clean, though she tried to pump him next day. Did you wire his gov'nor he was starting home?"

The doctor nodded, then called, "Come in!" as a knock sounded at the office door. A messenger with a telegram entered. As the doctor read the message he paled and wiped his forehead nervously. Then, in silence, he passed the yellow slip to McCarthy, who read:

My son Percy, been in Louisiana duck shooting. Returned home to-day. Regret error exceedingly. Your wire inexplicable under circumstances. You must have got hold of the wrong man.

A. G. GRYCE.

"Well," gasped the big nurse, "what do you know about that?" He added defensively: "Name was Percy Gryce all right. I seen it on the hotel register. And he had brown eyes and hair, and looked bad—I c'n swear to that!"

"And yet," returned the doctor tartly, "we have it on the father's authority that you picked the wrong Gryce!"

The speaking countenance of the nurse went through various nuances of color—pink, salmon pink, red, and purple.

"I hope he chokes—bad cess to him!" he growled.

But Percy's future fortunes, so far as known, were unaffected by the McCarthy curse. If he's known of it, the odds are that he would have spent little energy regretting the mere fact of its utterance, for he was busy at the time.

Sally, waiting patiently for word of his activities, was transported when she received the following message:

Intelligence assignment ended. Refusing offer captaincy to enlist in ranks, where good men needed. Where did those guys you spoke of get their lovely uniforms? One l. u. badly needed by your loving

PERCY.

The Girder Monkey at Sea



**Berton
Braley**

WHEN poets spoke of "ships of oak,"
They said a lot, maybe;
But ships of steel from deck to keel
Are what appeals to me.
For steel's my trade. A ship that's made
Of rivet, beam, an' plate
Is one whose strength in beam an' length
I can appreciate.

When combers smash an' boom an' crash
Against the freighter's side,
An' makes her groan an' creak an' moan
I don't get terrified.
For steel's the stuff. It's tough enough
To buck the biggest sea;
A wooden boat might get my goat
But steel don't worry me!

I've been a midge upon a bridge
An' kept my balance there
When tempests scream around a beam
Four hundred feet in air;
I've earned my pay where girders sway
In many a whoopin' gale,
So I don't quake when breakers break
An' roar acrost the rail!

A Chat With You

HOW many cigarettes are smoked every day in the United States? The able officials of the American Tobacco Company and its subsidiaries must answer that question. A great many, anyway.

Time was when the cigarette was considered as dangerous as absinth. Although folks on the continent of Europe had been rolling and smoking cigarettes as far back as 1850, in America the habit was frowned upon for decades after that.

"Young fellow," was the remark of the old-timer, "throw that coffin nail away. If you want to smoke, take a good seegar."

* * * *

UNFORTUNATELY good cigars are expensive and sometimes they do not agree with the stomachs of "young fellows." Well, then there is the pipe. We suppose that a good proportion of the readers of this magazine smoke pipes. If they do, they know the problems of the pipe tobacco smoker. A light, mild, fragrant mixture is likely to bite the tongue. Any mixture is likely to dry and spoil in this climate, especially with steam-heated houses. A tobacco that does not bite the tongue may be so strong as to make a man dizzy after a pipe or two. We have heard of the perfect tobacco and dreamed of it. Twice a friend of ours in the tropics has written us that he was sending us a box of the perfect thing. But both times the customs officers or the commanders of the rum-chaser fleet must have seized it for themselves, for it never reached us.

AN expert once told us that cigarette smoke inhaled might make a man nervous. He also said that heavy Kentucky tobacco which forms the ballast for most sturdy pipe tobaccos might upset the stomach. Some other tobaccos, such as Turkish, might affect the heart. As for cigars, there is no doubt that a box of Corona Coronas contains enough nicotine to kill a guinea pig or so; but after all we are not guinea pigs, and no man ever smoked a box of cigars at a sitting. Chewing, through a good portion of the United States, is obsolete. As for snuff taking—we read in the old novels how delicately gentlemen were wont to tap their snuff boxes and take a pinch. We see none of that sort of elegance now; though down South, in backwoods districts, there are still people who chew snuff. That is, they rub it on their gums with twigs of wood, and appear to enjoy it. If, somewhere south of the Mason and Dixon Line, you see a gentleman rolling a toothpick around in his lips as if it had all the savor of a good cigar, the chances are that it has been dipped in snuff.

* * * *

ALL this is not an advertisement for tobacco. It is just leading up to the thought that there are other quite interesting features to the tobacco question besides the selling and consumption of it. Where does it come from? Where does it grow? A lot of it is grown in these United States of ours—all the way from the cigar wrappers grown in Connecticut, through the Pennsylvania stogy belt, through Virginia and the Carolinas to Louisiana, where they raise the black perique.

A LOT of the cigarette tobacco, however, comes from abroad. You have heard of Egyptian cigarettes. Excellent cigarettes are made there, but the tobacco comes from Turkey. These Turks, keepers of harems, formidable fighters, the westernmost outpost of the Orient in Europe, developed long ago a taste for the American weed, to go with their black coffee; and they grow it by the mile. Its aroma is quite distinctive.

The plant grown there differs from its American cousin. The leaf is smaller and yellower.

ANY one who goes east of Constantinople is taking a chance. He is an adventurer. The frontiers, the dangerous places for the pioneer are not all in the Far West. Some of them are in the Near East. The hunt for the stuff to make a cigarette may take a man into as thrilling situations in Anatolia as the hunt for the material for a girl's necklace in Alaska. Read "The Golden Leaf," by Fred MacIsaac, starting in the next issue. It is a new and original sort of tale of action and adventure. It is one of the best. We want you to be sure to get the first installment. Out next Friday.

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A Chat with You

THE EDITOR

POP
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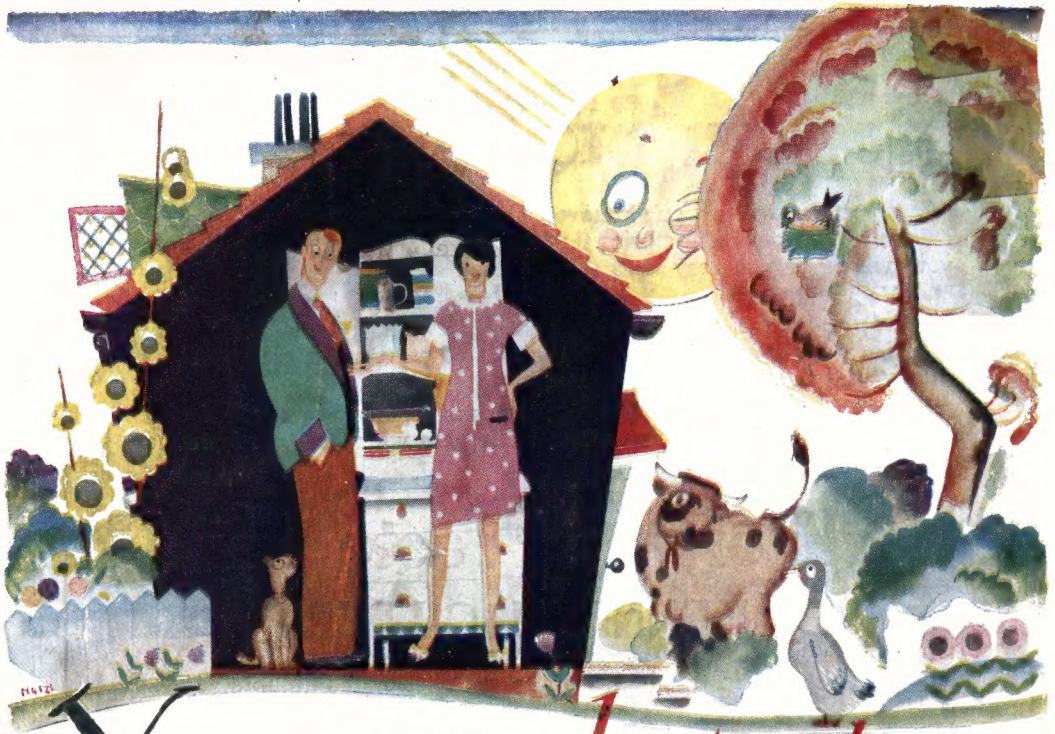
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The Green Sombrero

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You can, *but why* *should you* make HOME-MADE CANDY?

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way

FUDGE CENTER: 1½ cups pure cane sugar; ½ teaspoon creamery butter; 1 cup rich, full cream milk; 1 cup corn syrup; white of one egg.

CARAMEL LAYER: 4 teaspoons creamery butter; 1½ cups corn syrup; 3 cups rich, full cream milk; ¼ teaspoon salt.

PEANUT LAYER: 3 cups prime No. 1 Spanish whole nuts, roasted in oil (hulls removed).

CHOCOLATE COATING: Melt one pound pure milk chocolate.

Here's OhHenry! all ready to eat, and made that home-made way. Why wrestle with pots & pans? 'Cause you know home-made candy's best? So do we! That's why we stick to this good old home-made way in producing OhHenry! for you.

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So when you want home-made candy just save time & trouble — say

OhHenry!

Look for the new
Gingham wrapper

